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*The STORY of*  
**THE ROBINS**  
BY MRS. TRIMMER



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Book 3

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# THE STORY OF THE ROBINS



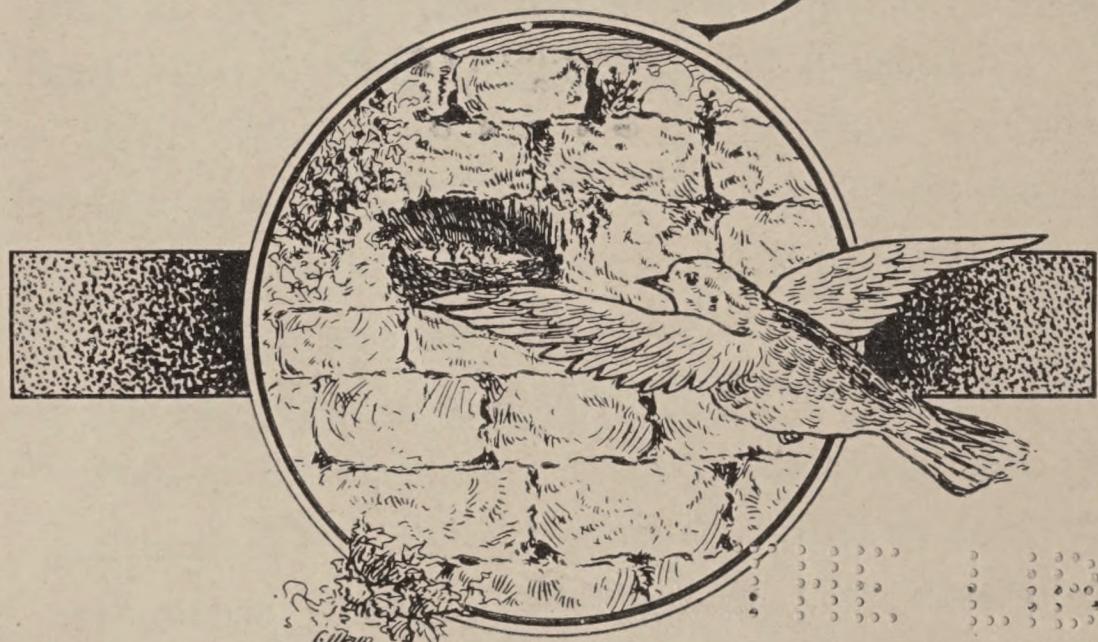




Frontispiece—*The Story of the Robins.*

THE NEST IN THE ORCHARD.

# THE STORY OF THE ROBINS



*mrs.* *(Kirby)*  
By SARAH TRIMMER

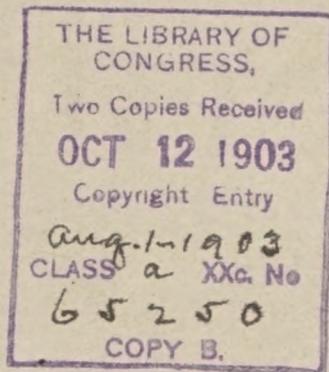
EDITED WITH INTRODUCTION.

By J. H. WILLARD,  
FORTY-FOUR ILLUSTRATIONS.

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## INTRODUCTION

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*Sept. 1, 1903*

MRS. SARAH TRIMMER, the author of this book, was born in Ipswich, England, in 1741. She was the daughter of Joshua Kirby, an architect of reputation, and at one time a tutor to George the Third, and also to Queen Charlotte of England.

Mrs. Trimmer counted among her friends many persons of eminence in the literary and artistic world, and was a favorite with Dr. Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Hogarth, Gainsborough, and many others.

When Sunday-schools were first started in England, Mrs. Trimmer took an active part in promoting them. Her work in this direction attracted the attention of the Queen, who expressed her approbation of Mrs. Trimmer's efforts, and allowed her to dedicate one of her books to Her Majesty.

Mrs. Trimmer records in her journal, that she passed the afternoon and evening of September 23, 1785, in finishing "Fabulous Histories," the original title of the book which we now know as

## INTRODUCTION

“The Story of the Robins.” This was not her first literary venture, however, for her “Easy Introduction to the Knowledge of Nature” appeared in 1780, and was the first of a score of juvenile and educational works of great merit. All are now forgotten, with the exception of “The Story of the Robins,” which has survived to delight succeeding generations. It has been issued in all sizes and styles; it has received nothing but praise from the greatest of critics; and it has been illustrated by the best European bird artists.

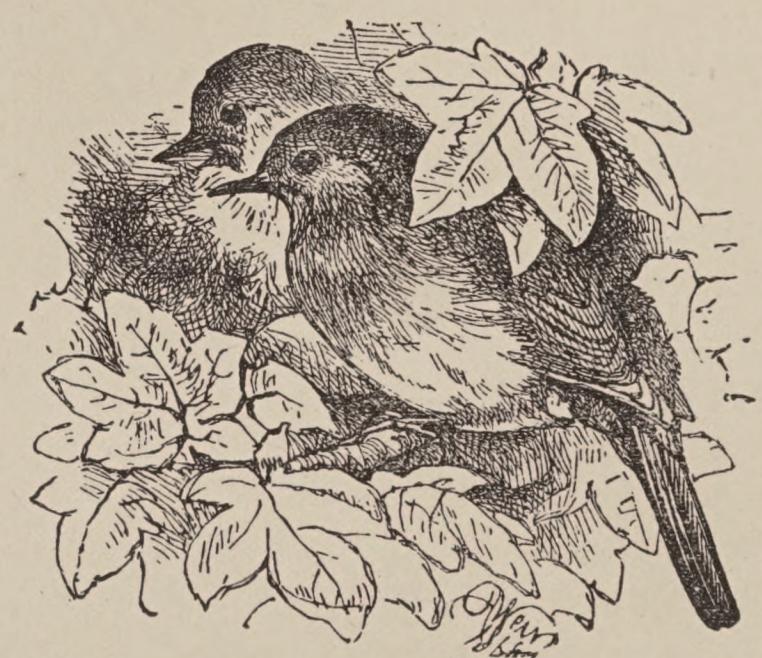
In its original form the story of the Benson family is incorporated with that of the birds. In this volume most of it has disappeared, but the story of the robins is nearly intact. It has seemed good, too, to retain much of the old-fashioned diction, which was the correct style of the period. Stripped of much of the sermonizing good Mrs. Trimmer used to put into the mouths of her birds, this book, one of the earliest of its kind, compares favorably with modern works devoted to the teaching of kindness to animals.

J. H. W.

## CONTENTS

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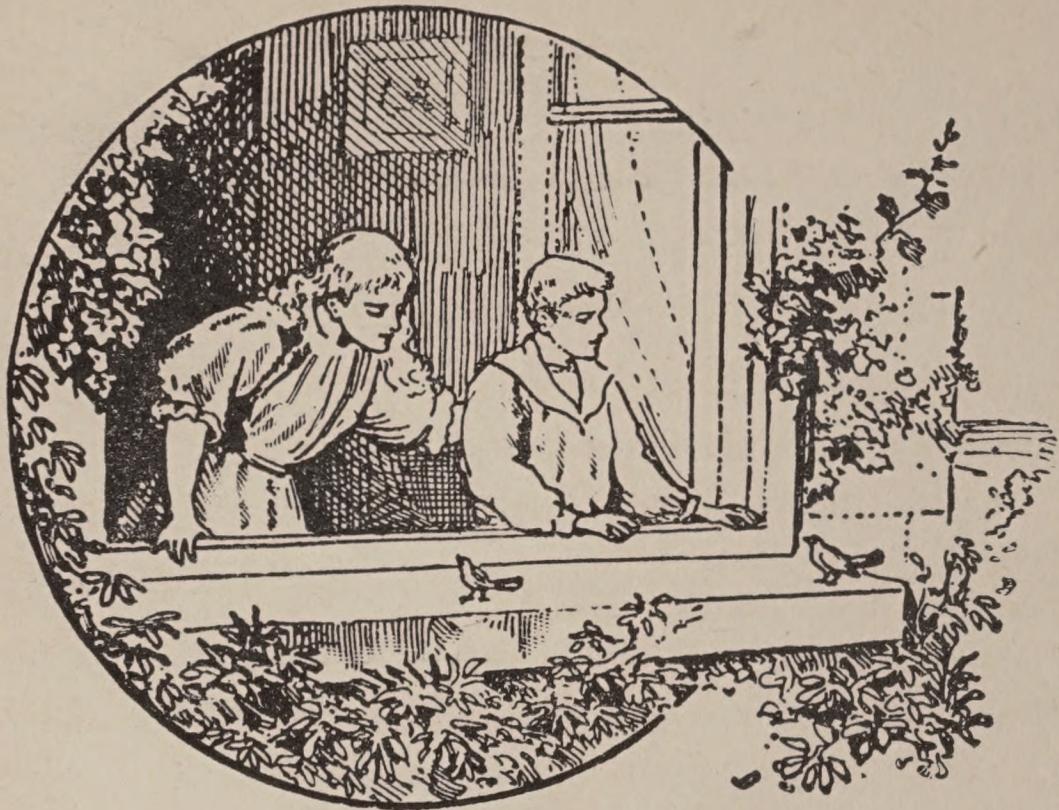
|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| INTRODUCTION . . . . .                  | vii  |
| THE NEST IN THE ORCHARD . . . . .       | 13   |
| THE NESTLINGS . . . . .                 | 16   |
| FEEDING THE NESTLINGS . . . . .         | 20   |
| ROBIN AND DICKY LEARN TO SING . . . . . | 24   |
| THE QUARREL . . . . .                   | 26   |
| ROBIN IN DISGRACE . . . . .             | 27   |
| ROBIN IS SCOLDED . . . . .              | 31   |
| THE ROBINS AND THE CHILDREN . . . . .   | 35   |
| BIRDS IN CAGES . . . . .                | 38   |
| THE NESTLINGS HAVE A FRIGHT . . . . .   | 43   |
| JOE, THE GARDENER . . . . .             | 49   |
| THE FATHER ROBIN'S STORY . . . . .      | 52   |
| THE CHILDREN SEE THE NEST . . . . .     | 59   |
| LEARNING TO FLY . . . . .               | 61   |
| ROBIN'S CONCEIT . . . . .               | 78   |
| ROBIN HAS A FALL . . . . .              | 81   |
| ROBIN IN THE TOOL-HOUSE . . . . .       | 86   |
| A BIRD OF PREY . . . . .                | 89   |
| ROBIN IS LOST AND FOUND . . . . .       | 90   |
| THE ROBINS MEET OTHER BIRDS . . . . .   | 96   |
| SEEING THE WORLD . . . . .              | 106  |
| ABLE TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES . . . . .   | 126  |



## ILLUSTRATIONS

|  | PAGE                 |
|--|----------------------|
| The nest in the orchard . . . . .                      | <i>Frontispiece.</i> |
| “The birds hopped around the window” . . . . .         | 13                   |
| The Skylark’s song . . . . .                           | 17                   |
| “Frederick begged to feed the birds himself” . . . . . | 21                   |
| “A boy was picking up worms” . . . . .                 | 23                   |
| “‘Give it,’ said the mother, ‘to Dicky’” . . . . .     | 29                   |
| Robin lectured by his father . . . . .                 | 33                   |
| “The Robins fed upon the breakfast table” . . . . .    | 37                   |
| “Why did you keep canary birds?” . . . . .             | 39                   |
| The persecuted canary . . . . .                        | 41                   |
| Joe frightens the nestlings . . . . .                  | 45                   |
| “A pair of robins have come to the orchard” . . . . .  | 49                   |
| “It is time to take our nestlings abroad” . . . . .    | 51                   |
| “One of them held the nest” . . . . .                  | 53                   |
| Death of Robin’s mate . . . . .                        | 57                   |
| “I never saw anything so pretty in my life!” . . . . . | 61                   |
| Harriet peeps at the robins’ nest . . . . .            | 63                   |
| “The father bird sang his morning lay” . . . . .       | 65                   |
| Learning to fly . . . . .                              | 67                   |
| “His father pushed him off the branch” . . . . .       | 71                   |
| “Let me instruct you what to do” . . . . .             | 73                   |
| The children in the wood . . . . .                     | 75                   |
| ‘Pecksy came up with a spider in her mouth” . . . . .  | 77                   |
| The greedy young robin . . . . .                       | 79                   |

|   | PAGE |
|---|------|
| Robin stunned by his fall . . . . .                           | 83   |
| “ Robin refreshed himself with the water ” . . . . .          | 85   |
| Robin in the tool-house . . . . .                             | 87   |
| “ Bearing off some unhappy victim ” . . . . .                 | 91   |
| “ ‘ There ’ s one of them, I declare ! ’ ” . . . . .          | 95   |
| “ Robin was safely deposited in a cage ” . . . . .            | 97   |
| Fight between a chaffinch and a sparrow . . . . .             | 99   |
| “ Cuckoo ! cuckoo ! ” . . . . .                               | 101  |
| The magpies and their nest . . . . .                          | 103  |
| “ Hopped into Frederick’s hand ” . . . . .                    | 105  |
| The nest of young owls . . . . .                              | 107  |
| The concert of birds . . . . .                                | 111  |
| “ The man was a bird-catcher ” . . . . .                      | 113  |
| Taking the linnet’s nest . . . . .                            | 115  |
| “ They saw a flash of fire ” . . . . .                        | 117  |
| “ ‘ Neither can I explain it,’ replied the father ” . . . . . | 119  |
| Perches were placed in parts of the aviary . . . . .          | 121  |
| The unhappy dove . . . . .                                    | 123  |
| “ They retired from the parlor to the court-yard ” . . . . .  | 127  |
| The young robins watched the departure of their parents       | 129  |



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

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### THE NEST IN THE ORCHARD

IN a hole, which time had made in a wall covered with ivy, a pair of redbreasts built their nest. It was sheltered from the rain, screened from the wind, and in an orchard where all birds were protected.

In this happy retreat, which no idle schoolboy dared to enter, the hen redbreast laid four eggs, and then took her seat upon them, resolv-

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

ing that nothing should tempt her to leave the nest for any length of time till she had hatched her infant brood. Her tender mate every morning took her place while she picked up a hasty breakfast, and often, before he tasted any food himself, cheered her with a song.

At length the day arrived when the happy mother heard the chirping of her little ones; with tenderness she spread her wings to cover them, threw out the eggs-shells in which they before lay confined, then pressed them to her bosom, and presented them to her mate, who seated himself by her side, that he might share her pleasure.

“We may promise ourselves much delight in rearing our little family,” said he, “but it will be necessary for you to leave the nest sometimes, to seek provisions for them.”

She declared her readiness to do so; and said that there would be no necessity for her to be long absent, as she had discovered a place near the orchard where food was scattered on purpose for such birds as would take the pains of seeking it.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“This is a lucky discovery for us,” replied her mate; “I myself must take a larger circuit, for some insects that are proper for the nestlings cannot be found in all places: however, I will bear you company whenever it is in my power.”

The little ones now began to be hungry, and opened their mouths for food; on which their kind father instantly flew to find it for them, and in turn supplied them all, as well as his beloved mate. This was a hard day’s work; and when evening came on, he was glad to take repose, so turning his head under his wing, he soon fell asleep; his mate followed his example; the four little ones had before fallen into a gentle slumber, and quietness for some hours reigned in the nest.

Next morning they were awakened by the song of a skylark, which had a nest near the orchard; and as the young redbreasts were impatient for food, their father prepared himself to renew his toil, requesting his mate to accompany him to the place she had mentioned.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“It is too early yet,” replied she; “I must beg you will go by yourself and procure a breakfast for us, as I am fearful of leaving the nestlings before the air is warmer.”

### THE NESTLINGS

The robin consented to this, and fed all his darlings, to whom I shall give the names of Robin, Dicky, Flapsy, and Pecksy. Then he perched on a tree, and, while he rested, entertained his family with his melody, till his mate, springing from the nest, called him to attend her; on which he took wing, and followed her to a courtyard belonging to a gentleman’s mansion.

No sooner did the happy pair appear before the parlor window, than it was thrown up by Harriet Benson, a little girl eleven years old.

Harriet called her brother to see the two robin redbreasts; and she was soon joined by Frederick, a rosy-cheeked boy, six years of age, who, as soon as he had taken a peep at the feathered strangers, ran to his mamma. “I must have a great piece of bread this morn-



THE SKYLARK'S SONG.

(See p. 15.)



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

ing," said he; "for there are all the sparrows and chaffinches that come every day, and two robin redbreasts besides."

When Harriet first appeared, the birds approached with eager expectation of the daily handful, and were surprised at the delay of her charity. They hopped around the window, they chirped, they twittered, and employed all their little arts to gain attention; and were on the point of departing, when Frederick, breaking a bit from the piece he held in his hand, attempted to scatter it among them, calling out at the same time, "Dicky, Dicky."

On hearing the well-known sound, the little flock drew near. Frederick begged that his sister would let him feed all the birds himself; but finding that he could not fling the crumbs far enough for the redbreasts, who, being strangers, kept at a distance, he resigned the task, and Harriet, with dexterous hands, threw some of them to the very spot where the affectionate pair stood, waiting for her notice, and with grateful hearts picked up the portion assigned them; and in the meanwhile, the

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

other birds, being satisfied, flew away, and the robins were left alone.

### FEEDING THE NESTLINGS

When the redbreasts had finished their meal, the mother-bird expressed her impatience to return to the nest; and having obtained her mate's consent, she repaired to her humble habitation, whilst he spread his wings and took his flight to a garden, where he had a great chance of finding worms for his family.

The hen-bird repaired immediately to the nest; her heart fluttered as she entered it, and she eagerly called out, "Are you all safe, my little dears?"

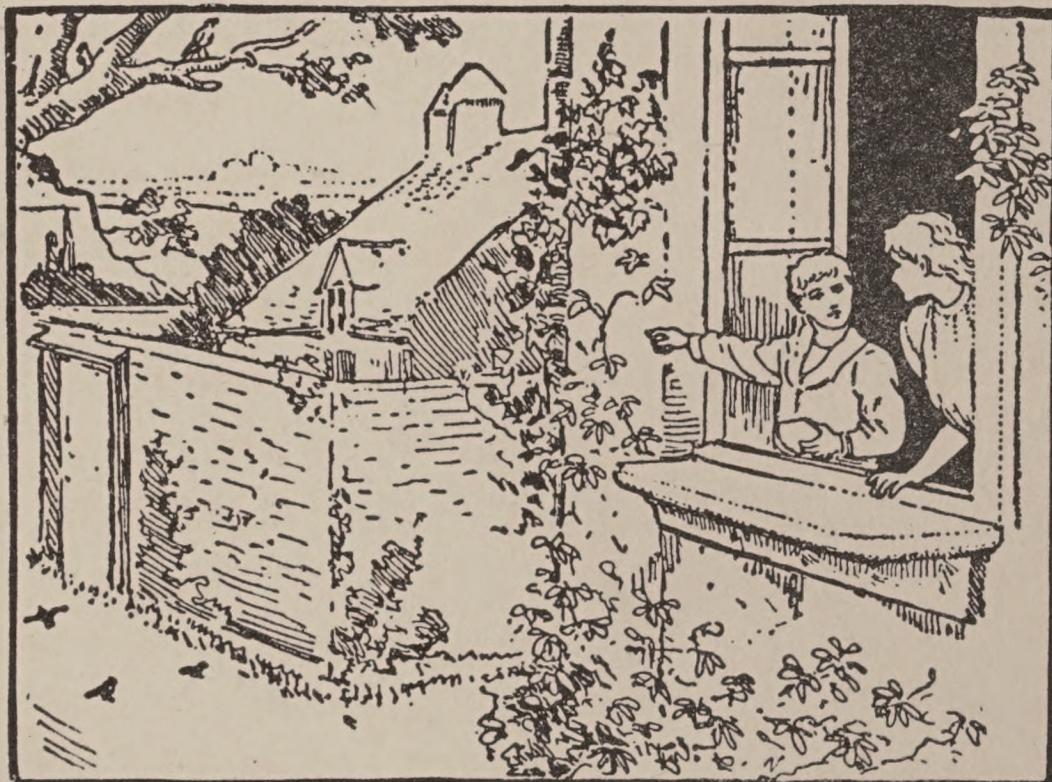
"All safe, mother," replied Pecksy; "but a little hungry, and very cold."

"Well," said she, "your last complaint I can soon remove; but in respect to the satisfying your hunger, that must be your father's task. He will soon be here."

Then spreading her wings over them all, she soon gave warmth to them, and they were again comfortable.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

In a short time her mate returned. He brought in his mouth a worm, which was given to Robin; and was going to fetch one for Dicky, but his mate said, "My young ones are now hatched, and you can keep them warm as well



"FREDERICK BEGGED TO FEED THE BIRDS HIMSELF."

as myself; take my place, and the next excursion shall be mine."

"I consent," answered he; "because I think a little flying now and then will do you good; but to save you trouble, I can direct you to a

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

spot where you may be certain of finding worms for this morning's supply." He then described the place; and on her quitting the nest he entered it, and gathered his young ones under his wings. "Come, my dears," said he, "I will sing you a song." He did so, and it was a very merry one, and delighted the nestlings; so that, though they were not quite comfortable under his wings, they did not regard it, nor think the time of their mother's absence long. She had not succeeded in the place she first went to, as a boy was picking up worms to angle with, of whom she was afraid, and therefore flew farther; but when she had obtained what she went for, she returned with all speed.

As soon as she came near the nest, her mate started up to make room for her, and take his turn of providing for his family. He was out of sight in an instant.

"My dear nestlings," said the mother, "how do you do?"

"Very well, thank you," replied all at once.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“And we have been very merry,” said Robin, “for my father has sung us a sweet song.”

“I think,” said Dicky, “I should like to learn it.”

“Well,” replied the mother, “he will teach



“A BOY WAS PICKING UP WORMS.”

it you, I dare say. Here he comes; ask him.”

“I am ashamed,” said Dicky.

“Then you are a silly bird; never be ashamed but when you commit a fault. Ask-

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

ing your father to teach you to sing is not one. Whatever so good a father sets you an example of, you may safely desire to imitate. Am I not right?" said she to her mate.

"Perfectly so," replied he; "I shall have pleasure in teaching them; but we must talk of that another time. Who is to feed poor Pecksy?"

"Oh! I," answered the mother, and was gone in an instant.

### ROBIN AND DICKY LEARN TO SING

"And so you want to learn to sing, Dicky!" said the father. "Well, then, listen attentively; you may learn the notes, though you will not be able to sing till your voice is stronger."

Robin now remarked that the song was very pretty, and expressed his desire to learn it also.

"By all means," said his father; "I shall sing it often, so you may learn it if you please."

"For my part," said Flapsy, "I do not think I could have patience to learn it."

"Nothing, Flapsy," answered the father,

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“can be acquired without patience, and I am sorry to find yours begin to fail you; but I hope, if you have no taste for music, that you will give greater application to things that may be of more importance.”

“Well,” said Pecksy, “I would apply to music with all my heart; but I do not believe it possible for me to learn it.”

“Perhaps not,” replied her father; “but I do not doubt you will apply to whatever your mother requires of you; and she is an excellent judge both of your talents and of what is suitable to your station in life. Here she comes.” Then rising to make room for her, “Take your seat, my love,” said he, “and I will perch upon the ivy.”

The hen again covered her brood, whilst her mate amused her with his singing and conversation till the evening, excepting that each parent bird flew out in turn to get food for their young ones.

In this manner several days passed with little variation; the nestlings were very thriving, and daily gained strength and knowledge.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

### THE QUARREL

One day, both the redbreasts, who always went together to Mrs. Benson's, were absent longer than usual.

When the mother-bird returned to the ivy wall, she stopped at the entrance of the nest with a beating heart; but, seeing her brood all safe and well, she hastened to take them under her wings. As soon as she was seated, she observed that they were not so cheerful as usual.

“What is the matter?” said she; “how have you agreed during my absence?”

To these questions all were unwilling to reply; for the truth was that they had been quarrelling.

‘What, all silent?’ said she. “I fear you have not obeyed my commands. I desire you will tell me the truth.” Robin, knowing that he was the greatest offender, began to justify himself before the others could have time to accuse him.

“I only gave Dick a little peck, mother,” said he, “because he crowded me so; and all the others fell upon me at once.”

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“Since you have begun, Robin,” answered Dicky, “I must speak, for you gave me a very hard peck; and I was afraid you had put out my eye. I am sure I made all the room I could for you; but you said you ought to have half the nest and to be master when your father and mother were out, because you are the eldest.”

“I do not love to tell tales,” said Flapsy, “but what Dicky says is true, Robin.”

“And you set your foot very hard upon me,” cried Pecksy, “for telling you that you had forgotten your mother’s command.”

### ROBIN IN DISGRACE

“This is a sad story,” said the mother. “I am sorry to find, Robin, that you already show such a bad disposition. As for you being the eldest, though it makes me show you a preference on all proper occasions, it does not give you a privilege to domineer over your brother and sisters. To show you that you are not master of the nest, I desire you to get from under my wing, and sit on the outside.”

Robin, greatly mortified, retired from his

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

mother, on which Dicky began to intercede for him.

“Pardon Robin, my dear mother,” said he; “I forgive his treatment to me.”

“You are a good bird, Dicky,” said his mother; “but such an offence as this must be repented of before it is pardoned.”

At this instant her mate returned with a fine worm, and looked as usual for Robin.

“Give it,” said the mother, “to Dicky; Robin must be served last this morning; nay, I do not know whether I shall permit him to have any food the whole day.”

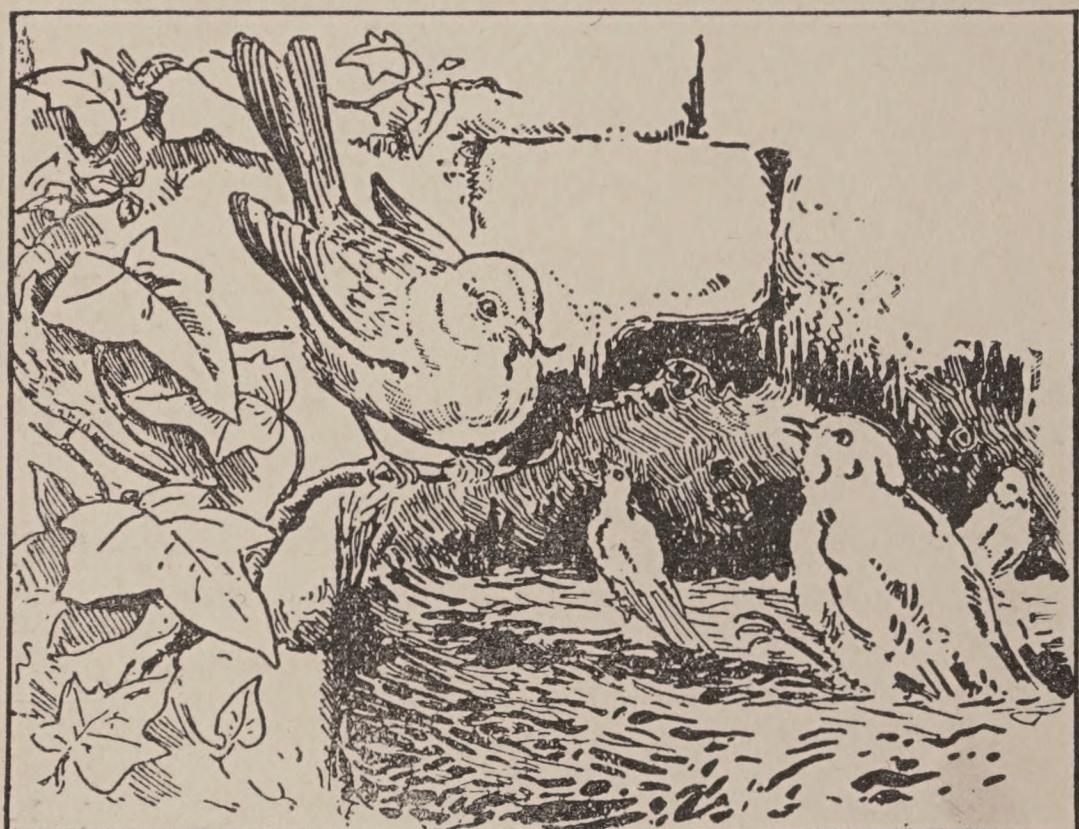
Dicky was very unwilling to mortify his brother; but, on his mother commanding him not to detain his father, he opened his mouth, and swallowed the delicious mouthful.

“What can be the matter?” said the good father, when he had emptied his mouth; “surely none of the little ones have been naughty! But I cannot stop to inquire at present, for I left another worm, which may be gone if I do not make haste back.”

The father soon came and fed Flapsy, and

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

then, thinking it best for his mate to continue her admonitions, he flew off again. During her father's absence, Pecksy, whose little heart was full of affectionate concern for the punish-



“‘GIVE IT,’ SAID THE MOTHER, ‘TO DICKY.’”

ment of her brother, thus attempted to comfort him:

“Robin, do not grieve, I will give you my breakfast, if my mother will let me.”

“Oh,” said Robin, “I do not want any break-

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

fast; if I may not be served first, I will have none."

"Shall I ask my mother to forgive you?" said Pecksy.

"I do not want any of your intercessions," replied he; "if you had not been a parcel of ill-natured things, I should not have been pushed about as I am."

"Come back, Pecksy," said the mother, who overheard them. "I will not have you talk with so naughty a bird. I forbid every one of you even to go near him."

The father then arrived, and Pecksy was fed.

"You may rest yourself, my dear," said the mother, "your morning's task is ended."

"Why, what has Robin done?" asked he.

"What I am sorry to relate," she replied; "quarreled with his brother and sisters."

"Quarreled with his brother and sisters? you surprise me; I could not have suspected he would have been either so foolish or so unkind."

"Oh, this is not all," said the mother; "for he presumes on being the eldest, and claims

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

half the nest to himself when we are absent, and now is sullen because he is disgraced, and not fed first as usual."

"If this be the case," replied the father, "leave me to settle this business, my dear, and pray go into the air a little, for you seem to be sadly grieved at his misconduct."

"I am disturbed," said she, "I confess; for after all my care and kindness, I did not expect such a sad return as this. I am sorry to expose this naughty bird even to you, but he will not be corrected by me. I will do as you desire, go into the air a little." So saying, she flew to a neighboring tree, where she anxiously waited the event of her mate's admonition.

### ROBIN IS SCOLDED

As soon as the mother departed the father thus addressed the naughty bird: "And so, Robin, you want to be master of the nest? A pretty master you would make indeed, who do not know even how to govern your own temper! I will not stand to talk much to you now, but, depend upon it, I will not suffer you to

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

use any of the family ill, particularly your good mother; and if you persist in obstinacy I will certainly turn you out of the nest before you can fly."

These threatenings frightened Robin, and he also began to be very hungry as well as cold; he therefore promised to behave better for the future, and his brother and sisters pleaded that he might be forgiven.

When the mother heard this she raised her drooping head and hastened into the nest.

In the meanwhile, Robin wished for, yet dreaded, her return. As soon as he saw her he lifted up a supplicating eye, and in a weak tone (for hunger and sorrow had made him faint), he cried, "Forgive me, dear mother, I will not again offend you!"

"I accept your submission, Robin," said she, "and will once more receive you to my wing; but your behavior has made me very unhappy."

She then made room for him; he nestled closely to her side, and soon found the benefit of her fostering heat; but he was still hungry,



GREENAWAY

ROBIN LECTURED BY HIS FATHER.

(See p. 31.)



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

yet he had not confidence to ask his father to fetch him any food; but this kind parent, seeing that his mother had received him into favor, flew with all speed to a field, where he soon met with a worm, which, with tender love, he presented to Robin, who swallowed it with gratitude.

Thus was peace restored to the nest, and the happy mother once more rejoiced that harmony reigned in the family.

All the nestlings continued very good for several days. The little family were soon covered with feathers, which their mother taught them to dress, telling them that neatness was a very essential thing, both for health, and also to render them agreeable in the eye of the world. At the same time that she recommended neatness of person, she did not forget to caution them against vanity and deceit.

### THE ROBINS AND THE CHILDREN

Robin was a very strong bird, not remarkable for his beauty; but there was a great briskness in his manner, which covered many de-

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

fects; and he was very likely to attract notice. His father judged, from the tone of his chirpings, that he would be a very good songster.

Dicky had a remarkably fine plumage, although being young, the red on his breast had not appeared; body and wings were of an elegant mottled brown, and his eyes sparkled like diamonds.

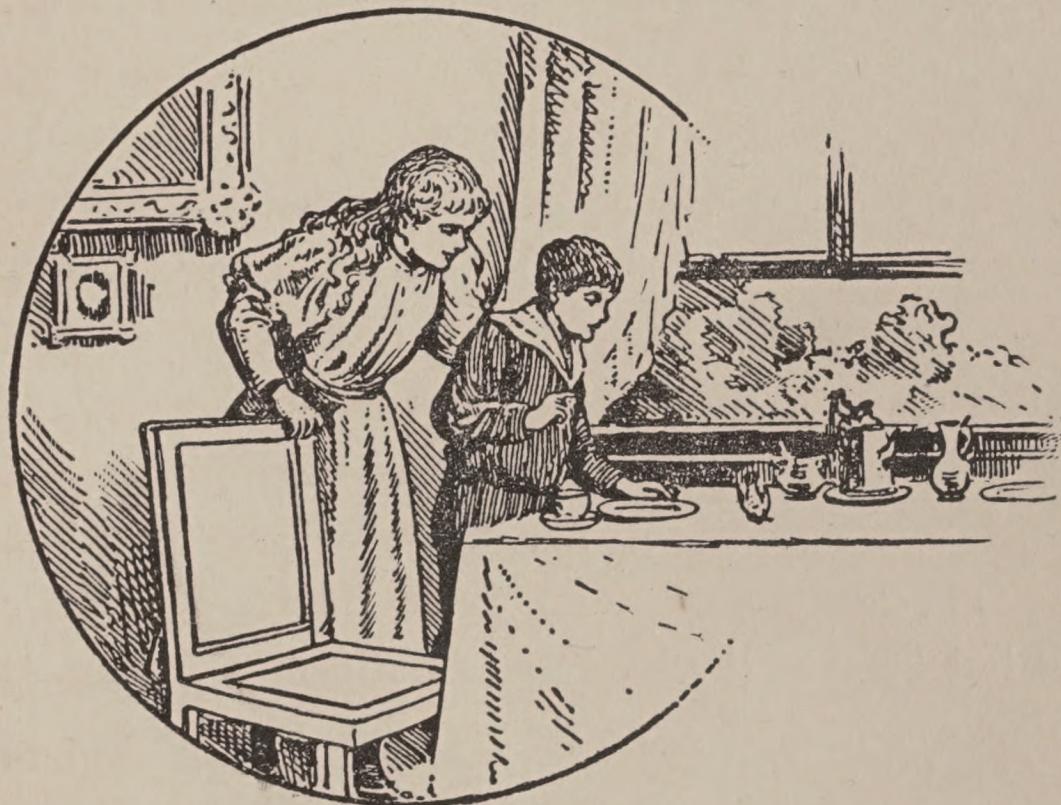
Flapsy was also very pretty; but more distinguished for the elegance of her shape than for the variety and lustre of her feathers.

Pecksy had no outward charms to recommend her to notice, but they were doubly supplied by the sweetness of her disposition. Her temper was constantly serene; she was ever attentive to the happiness of her parents, and would not have grieved them for the world; and her affection for her brothers and sister was so great, that she constantly preferred their interest to her own.

The kind parents attended to them with unremitting affection, and made their daily visit to Frederick and Harriet Benson, who punctually discharged the benevolent duty of feeding

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

them. The robin-redbreasts, made familiar by repeated favors, approached nearer and nearer to their little friends by degrees; and at length ventured to enter the room, and feed upon the breakfast-table. Harriet was delighted at this,



“THE ROBINS FED UPON THE BREAKFAST-TABLE.”

and Frederick was overjoyed; he longed to catch the birds; but his mother told him that would be the very means to drive them away. Harriet entreated him not to frighten them on any account, and he was prevailed on to for-

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

bear; but could not help expressing a wish that he had them in a cage, that he might feed them all day long.

### BIRDS IN CAGES

The cock-bird, having finished his breakfast, flew out at the window, followed by his mate; and, as soon as they were out of sight, Mrs. Benson continued her discourse. “And would you really confine these sweet creatures in a cage, Frederick, merely to have the pleasure of feeding them? Should you like to be always shut up in a little room, and think it sufficient if you were supplied with victuals and drink? But this is not all, for many a poor bird is caught and taken away from its family, after it has been at the trouble of building a nest, and perhaps laid its eggs, or even hatched its young ones, which are by this means exposed to certain destruction. It is likely that these very redbreasts may have young ones, for this is the season of the year for their hatching; and I rather think they have, from the circumstance of their always coming together.”

“If that is the case,” said Miss Harriet, “it

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

would be a pity, indeed, to confine them. But why, mother, if it is wrong to catch birds, did you at one time keep canary-birds?"

"The case is very different in respect to canary-birds, my dear," said Mrs. Benson: "by



"WHY DID YOU KEEP CANARY-BIRDS?"

keeping them in a cage, I did them a kindness. I remember once to have seen a canary bird which had been turned loose because it could not sing. It was starving for want of food, famishing with thirst, and shivering with cold,

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

while sparrows and chaffinches were pursuing it from place to place with every mark of insult. I could not help fancying the little creature to be like a foreigner just landed from some distant country, followed by rude boys, who were ridiculing him because his dress and language were strange to them."

"And what became of the canary?" said Harriet.

"I ordered a cage hung on a tree," replied Mrs. Benson, "to which the bird flew with evident pleasure. I kept it for some years, and then gave it to a friend, who placed it in his aviary, where it is now enjoying itself. I have also occasionally kept larks. In severe winters, vast numbers of them come to this country from a colder climate, and many perish. Quantities of them are killed and sold for the table; and the bird-catchers usually have a great many to sell, and many an idle boy has some to dispose of. I frequently buy them, as you know, Harriet; but as soon as the fine weather returns, I always set them at liberty. But come, my dears, prepare for your morning walk."



THE PERSECUTED CANARY.



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

### THE NESTLINGS HAVE A FRIGHT

In the meantime the hen redbreast returned to the nest, while her mate took his flight in search of food for his family. When the mother approached the nest, she was surprised at not hearing, as usual, the chirping of her young ones; and what was her astonishment at seeing them all crowded together, trembling with apprehension!

“What is the matter, my nestlings,” said she, “that I find you in this terror?”

“Oh, my dear mother!” cried Robin, who first ventured to raise up his head, “is it you?”

Pecksy then revived, and entreated her mother to come into the nest, which she did without delay; and the little tremblers crept under her wings, endeavoring to conceal themselves in this happy retreat.

“What has terrified you in this manner?” said she.

“Oh, I do not know,” replied Dicky; “but we have seen such a monster as I never beheld before!”

“A monster, my dear! pray describe it.”

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“I cannot,” said Dicky; “it was too frightful to be described.”

“Frightful indeed,” cried Robin; “but I had a full view of it, and will give the best description I can. We were all sitting peaceably in the nest, and very happy together; Dicky and I were trying to sing, when suddenly we heard a noise against the wall, and presently a great round red face appeared before the nest, with a pair of enormous staring eyes, a very large beak, and below that a wide mouth, with two rows of bones that looked as if they could grind us all to pieces in an instant. About the top of this round face, and down the sides, hung something black, but not like feathers. When the two staring eyes had looked at us for some time, the whole thing disappeared.”

“I cannot at all conceive from your description, Robin, what this thing could be,” said the mother; “but perhaps it may come again.”

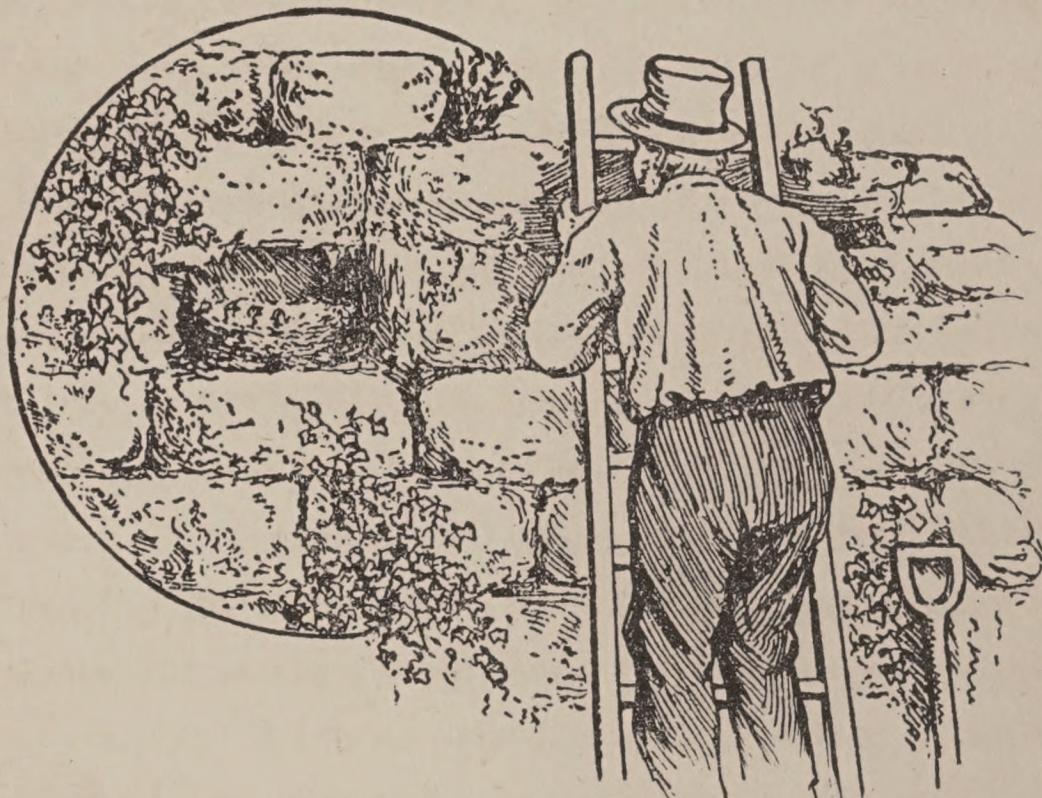
“Oh, I hope not!” cried Flapsy; “I shall die with fear if it does.”

“Why so, my love?” said her mother; “has it done you any harm?”

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“I cannot say it has,” replied Flapsy.

“Well, then, you do very wrong, my dear, in giving way to such apprehensions. You must strive to get the better of this fearful disposition. When you go abroad in the world, you



JOE FRIGHTENS THE NESTLINGS.

will see many strange objects; and if you are terrified at every appearance which you cannot account for, you will live a most unhappy life. Endeavor to be good, and then you need not fear anything. But here comes your father;

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

perhaps he will be able to explain the appearance which has so much alarmed you to-day."

As soon as the father had given the worm to Robin, he was preparing to depart for another, but, to his surprise, all the rest of the nestlings begged him to stay, declaring they had rather go without their meal if only he would remain at home and take care of them.

"Stay at home and take care of you!" said he. "Why is that more necessary now than usual?"

The mother then related the strange occurrence that had occasioned this request.

"Nonsense!" said he; "a monster! great eyes! large mouth! long beak! I don't understand such stuff. Besides, as it did them no harm, why are they to be in such terror now it is gone?"

"Don't be angry, dear father," said Pecksy, "for it was very frightful indeed."

"Well," said he, "I will fly all round the orchard, and perhaps I may meet this monster."

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“Oh, it will eat you up, it will eat you up!” said Flapsy.

“Never fear,” said he; and away he flew.

The mother then again attempted to calm them, but all in vain; their fears were now redoubled for their father’s safety. However, to their great joy, he soon returned.

“Well,” said he, “I have seen this monster.” The little ones then clung to their mother, fearing the dreadful creature was just at hand.

“What, afraid again!” cried he; “a parcel of stout hearts I have in my nest, truly! Why, when you fly about in the world, you will in all probability see hundreds of such monsters, as you call them, unless you choose to confine yourselves to a retired life; nay, even in woods and groves you will be liable to meet some of them, and those of the most mischievous kind.”

“I begin to comprehend,” said the mother, “that these dear nestlings have seen the face of a man.”

“Even so,” replied her mate; “it is a man, no other than our friend the gardener, that has so alarmed them.”

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“A man!” cried Dicky; “was that frightful thing a man?”

“Nothing more, I assure you,” answered his father, “and a good man too, I have reason to believe; for he is very careful not to frighten your mother and me when we are picking up worms, and has frequently thrown crumbs to us when he was eating his breakfast.”

“And does he live in this garden?” said Flapsy.

“He works here very often,” replied her father, “but is frequently absent.”

“Oh, then,” cried she, “pray take us abroad when he is away, for indeed I cannot bear to see him.”

“You are a little simpleton,” said the father; “and if you do not endeavor to get more courage, I will leave you in the nest by yourself when I am teaching your brothers and sister to fly and peck. And what will you do then? for you must not expect we shall go from them to bring you food.”

Flapsy, fearful that her father would be quite angry, promised to follow his directions

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

in every respect; and the rest began to recover their spirits.

### JOE, THE GARDENER

Whilst this terrible commotion was going on, the monster, who was no other than honest Joe,



“A PAIR OF ROBINS HAVE COME TO THE ORCHARD.”

the gardener, went to the house, and inquired for his young master and mistress, having, as he justly supposed, some pleasing news to tell them.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

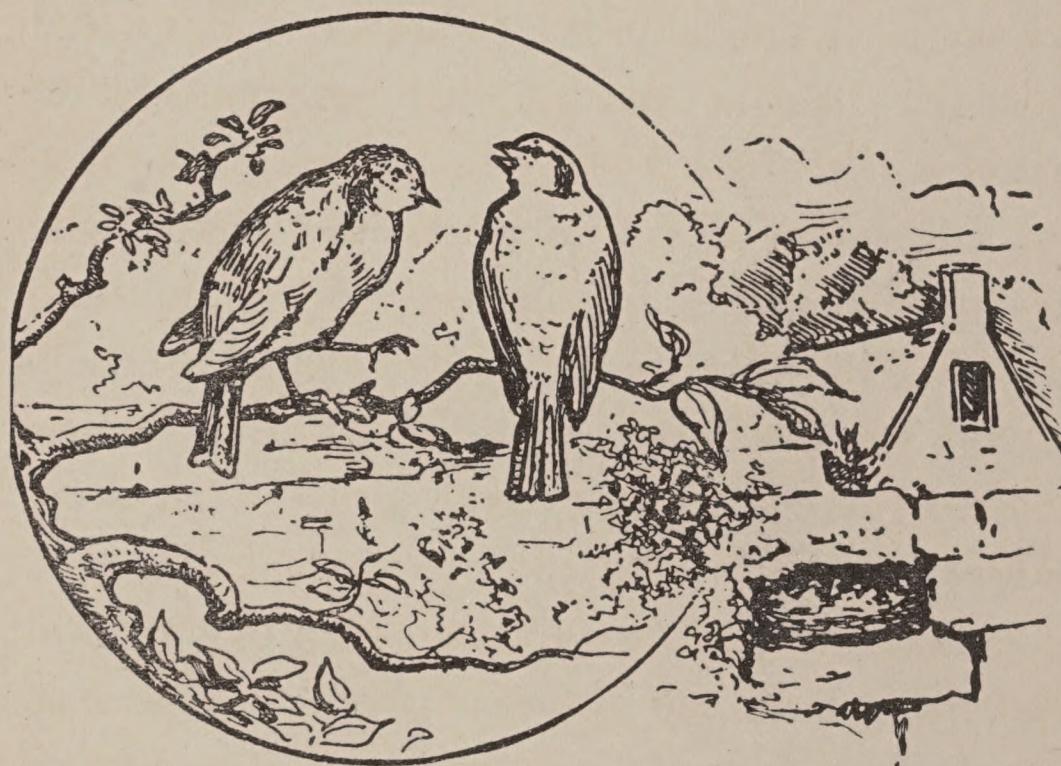
“Master Frederick,” said Joe, “a pair of robins have come very often to one place in the orchard lately; so, thought I, these birds have got a nest. So I watched and watched, and at last I saw the old hen fly into a hole in the ivy wall. I had a fancy to set my ladder and look in; but, as master ordered me not to frighten the birds, I stayed till the old one flew out again, and then I mounted, and there I saw the little creatures full fledged; and if you and Miss Harriet may go with me, I will show them to you, for the nest is but a little way from the ground, and you may easily get up the step-ladder.”

Frederick was in raptures, being confident that these were the identical robins he was so attached to, and, like a little thoughtless boy as he was, he would have gone immediately with the gardener, had not the sister reminded him that it was proper to ask leave first; she therefore told Joe she would let him know when she had done so.

Now the redbreasts, having quieted the fears of their young family, and fed them as usual,

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

retired to a tree, desiring their little nestlings not to be terrified if the monster should look in upon them again, as it was very probable he would do. They promised to bear the sight as well as they could.



“IT IS TIME TO TAKE OUR NESTLINGS ABROAD.”

When the old ones were seated in the tree, “It is time,” said the father, “to take our nestlings abroad. You see, my love, how very timidous they are; and if we do not use them a little to the world, they will never be able to shift for themselves.”

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“Very true,” replied the mother; “they are now full fledged, and therefore, if you please, we will take them out to-morrow; but prepare them for it.”

“The best way,” answered her mate, “will be to leave them by themselves a little; therefore we will now take a flight together, and then come back.”

The mother complied, but she longed to be with her dear family.

When they stopped a little to rest on a tree, “Last year,” said the hen redbreast, “it was my misfortune to be deprived of my nestlings by some cruel boys, before they were quite fledged, and it is that which makes me so timid now, that I do not feel comfortable when I am away from them.”

## THE FATHER ROBIN’S STORY

“A calamity of the same kind befell me,” replied the father; “I never shall forget it. I had been taking a flight in the woods, in order to procure some nice morsels for one of my nestlings. When I returned to the place in which

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

I had imprudently built, the first circumstance that alarmed me was a part of my nest scattered on the ground, just at the entrance of my habitation. I then saw a large opening in the wall, where before there was only room for my-



“ONE OF THEM HELD THE NEST.”

self to pass. I stopped with a beating heart, in hopes of hearing the chirpings of my beloved family, but all was silence. I then resolved to enter; but what was my consternation when I found that the nest, which my dear

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

mate and I had with so much labor built, and the dear little ones who were the joy of our lives, were stolen away; nay, I did not know but the tender mother was also taken. I rushed out of the place, distracted with apprehensions for the miseries they might endure; lamenting my weakness, which rendered me incapable of rescuing them; but recollecting that my dear mate might in all probability have escaped, I resolved to go in search of her. As I was flying along, I saw three boys, whose appearance was far from disagreeable; one of them held in his hand my nest of young ones, which he eyed with cruel delight, while his companions seemed to share his joy. The dear little creatures, insensible of their fate (for they were newly hatched), opened their mouths, expecting to be fed by me or their mother, but all in vain; to have attempted feeding them at this time would have been certain destruction to myself; but I resolved to follow the barbarians, that I might at least see to what place my darlings were consigned.

“In a short time, the party arrived at a house,

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

and he who before held the nest now committed it to the care of another, but soon returned with a kind of food I was totally unacquainted with; and with this, my young ones, when they gaped for food, were fed, hunger induced them to swallow it, but soon after, mising the warmth of their mother, they set up a general cry, which pierced my very heart. Immediately after this the nest was carried away, and what became of my nestlings then I could never discover, though I frequently hovered about the fatal spot of their imprisonment with the hope of seeing them."

"Pray," said the hen redbreast, "what became of your mate?"

"Why, my dear," said he, "when I found there was no chance of assisting my little ones, I pursued my course, and sought her in every place of our usual resort, but to no purpose; at length I returned to the bush where I beheld an afflicting sight indeed, my beloved companion lying on the ground just expiring. I flew to her instantly, and endeavored to recall her to life. At the sound of my voice she lifted

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

up her languid eyelids, and said, ‘And are you then safe, my love? What is become of our little ones?’ In hope of comforting her, I told her I hoped they were alive and well; but she replied, ‘Your consolations come too late; the blow is struck, I feel my death approaching. The horror which seized me when I missed my nestlings, and supposed myself robbed at once of my mate and infants, was too powerful for my weak frame to sustain. Oh, why will the human race be so wantonly cruel?’ The agonies of death now came on, and, after a few convulsive pangs, she breathed her last, and left me an unhappy widower. I passed the remainder of the summer, and a dreary winter that succeeded it, in a very uncomfortable manner, though the natural cheerfulness of my disposition did not leave me long a prey to unavailing sorrow. I resolved the following spring to seek another mate, and had the good fortune to meet with you, whose amiable disposition has renewed my happiness. And now, my dear,’ said he, ‘let me ask you what became of your former companion?’



DEATH OF ROBIN'S MATE.



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“Why,” replied the hen redbreast, “soon after the loss of our nest, as he was endeavoring to discover what had become of it, a cruel hawk caught him up, and devoured him in an instant. I need not say that I felt the bitterest pangs for his loss; it is sufficient to inform you that I led a solitary life till I met with you, whose endearing behavior has made society again agreeable to me.”

### THE CHILDREN SEE THE NEST

As soon as Joe, the gardener, found that the young “gentry,” as he called them, had obtained permission to accompany him, he took Frederick by the hand, and said, “Come along.”

When they arrived at the desired spot, Joe placed the ladder, and his young master, with a little assistance, mounted it very nimbly.

“Oh, the sweet creatures!” cried he, “there are four of them, I declare! I never saw anything so pretty in my life! I wish I might carry you all home!”

“That you must not do, Frederick,” said his sister; “and I beg you will come away.”

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

Joe then addressed Harriet: "Now, Miss Harriet," said he, "will you go up?"

Harriet was willing, but, being fearful of terrifying the little birds, took only a peep at the nest.

At this instant Frederick perceived the two redbreasts, who were returning from their little excursion, and called to his sister to observe them. He was very desirous to watch whether they would go back to their nest, but she would on no account consent to stay, lest her mother should be displeased and lest the birds should be frightened; Frederick, therefore, with reluctance followed her, and Joe attended them to the house.

As soon as they were out of sight, the hen-bird alighted upon the ivy, and, peeping into the nest, inquired how they all did.

"Very well, dear mother," said Robin.

"What," cried the father, who now alighted, "all safe! Not one eaten up by the monster?"

"No, father," replied Dicky, "we are not devoured; and yet, I assure you, the monster we

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

saw before has been here again, and brought two others with him."

"Two others! what, like himself?" said the father; "I thought, Flapsy, you were to die with apprehension if you saw him again? But now



"I NEVER SAW ANYTHING SO PRETTY IN MY LIFE!"

summon up all your courage, for to-morrow you shall, with your brothers and sister, begin to see the world."

### LEARNING TO FLY

Early in the morning the hen redbreast

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS,

awakened her young brood. "Come, my little ones," said she, "shake off your drowsiness; remember this is the day fixed for your entrance into the world. I desire that each of you will dress your feathers before you go out; for a slovenly bird is my aversion, and neatness is a great advantage to the appearance of every one."

The father bird was upon the wing betimes, that he might give each one of his young ones a breakfast before they attempted to leave the nest. When he had fed them, he desired his mate to accompany him as usual to Mr. Benson's, where he found the parlor window open, and his young friends sitting with their mother. Crumbs had been, according to custom, strewn before the window, which the other birds had nearly devoured; but the redbreasts took their usual post on the tea-table, and the father bird sung his morning lay; after which they returned with all possible speed to the nest, for, having so important an affair to manage, they could not be long absent.

As the father entered the nest, he cried out



HARRIET PEEPS AT THE ROBINS' NEST.

(See p. 60.)

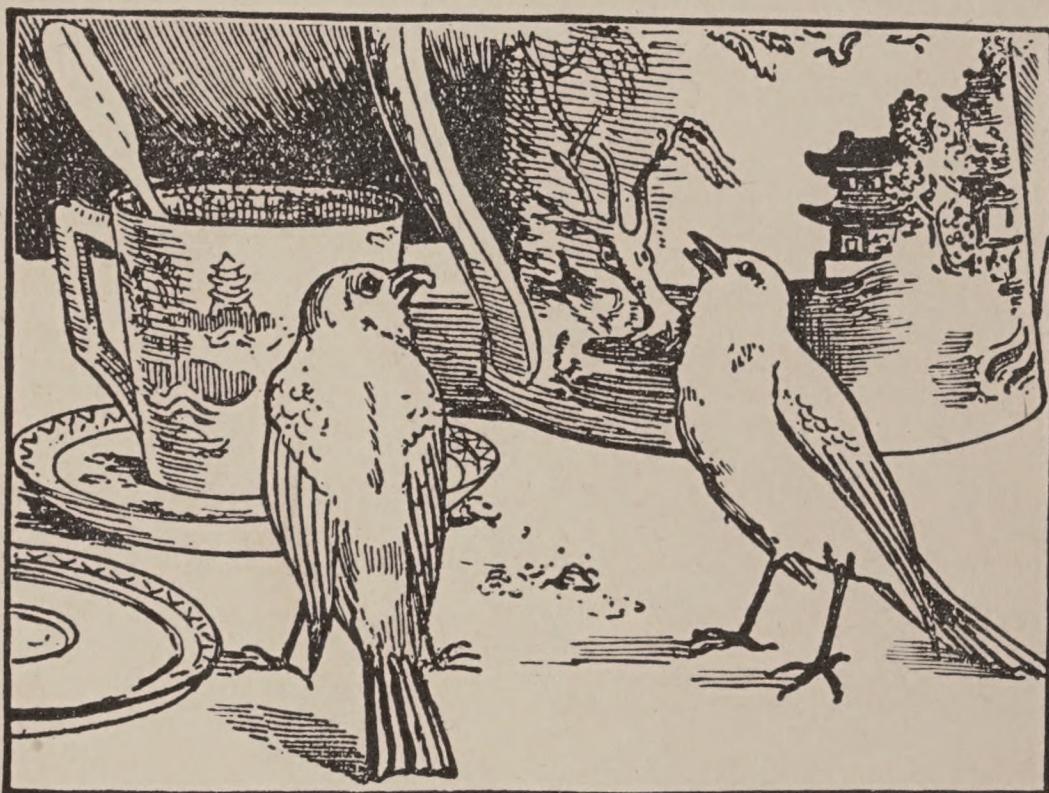


## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

with a cheerful voice, "Well, my nestlings, are you all ready?"

"Yes," they replied.

The mother then advanced, and desired that each of them would get upon the edge of the



"THE FATHER BIRD SANG HIS MORNING LAY."

nest. Robin and Pecksy sprang up in an instant; but Dicky and Flapsy, being timorous, were not so expeditious.

The hearts of the parents felt great delight at the view they now had of their young family,

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

which appeared to be strong, vigorous, and lively; and, in a word, endued with every gift of nature requisite to their success in the world.

“Now,” said the father, “stretch your wings, Robin, and flutter them a little, in this manner (showing him the way), and be sure to observe my directions exactly. Very well,” said he, “do not attempt to fly yet, for here is neither air nor space enough for that purpose. Walk gently after me to the wall; then follow me to the tree that stands close to it, and hop on from branch to branch, as you will see me do; then rest yourself; and as soon as you see me fly away, spread your wings, and exert all the strength you have to follow me.”

Robin acquitted himself to admiration, and alighted very safely on the ground.

“Now stand still,” said the father, “till the rest join us.” Then, going back, he called upon Dicky to do the same as his brother had done; but Dicky was very fearful of fluttering his wings, for he was a little coward, and expressed many apprehensions that he should not reach the ground without falling, as they were



LEARNING TO FLY.



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

such a great height from it. His father, who was a very courageous bird, was quite angry with him.

“Why, you foolish little thing,” said he, “do you mean to stay in the nest by yourself and starve? I shall leave off bringing you food, I assure you. Get up this instant.”

Dicky, intimidated by his father’s displeasure, got up, and advanced as far as the branch from which he was to descend; but here his fears returned, and, instead of making an effort to fly, he stood flapping his wings in a most irresolute manner, and suffered his father to lead the way twice without following him. This good parent, finding he would not venture to fly, took a circuit unperceived by Dicky; and watching the opportunity, when his wings were a little spread, came suddenly behind him and pushed him off the branch. Dicky, finding himself in actual danger of falling, now gladly stretched his pinions, and upborne by the air, he gently descended to the ground, so near the spot where Robin stood that the latter easily reached him by hopping.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

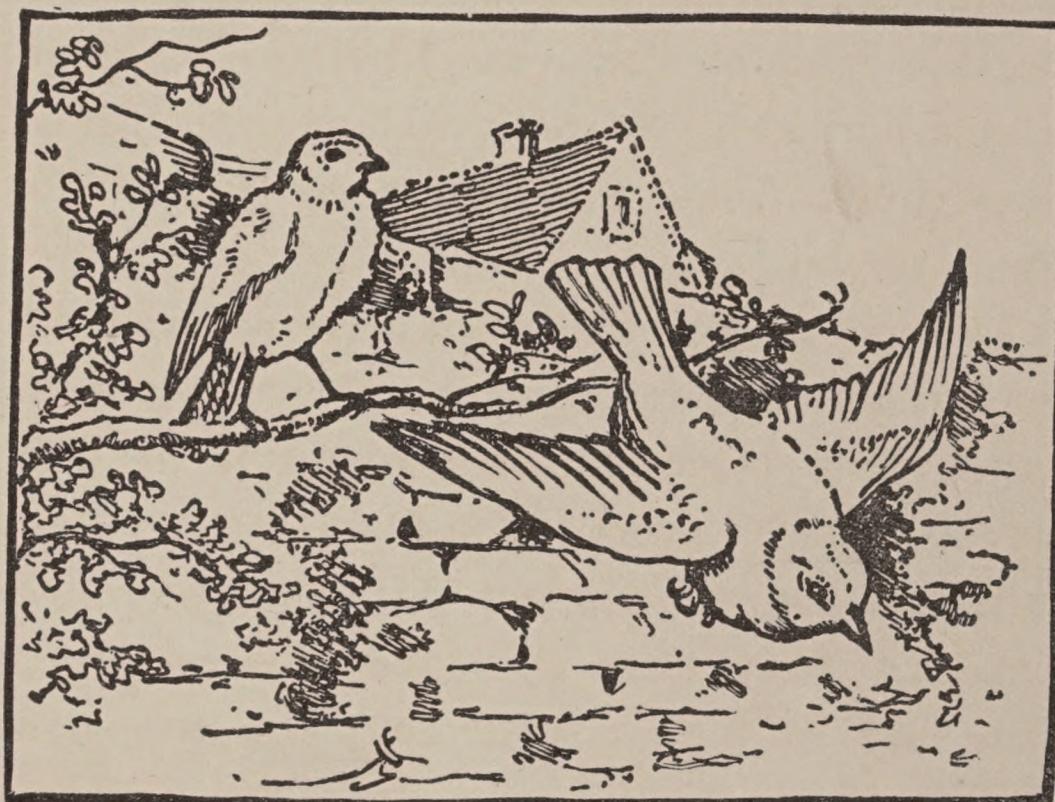
The mother now undertook to conduct Flapsy and Pecksy, whilst the father stayed to take care of the two already landed. Flapsy made a thousand difficulties, but at length yielded to her mother's persuasions, and flew safely down. Pecksy, without the least hesitation, accompanied her, and, by exactly following the directions given, found the task much easier than she expected.

As soon as they had a little recovered from the fatigue and fright of their first essay at flying, they began to look round them with astonishment. Every object on which they turned their eyes excited their curiosity and wonder. They were no longer confined to a little nest, built in a small hole, but were now at full liberty in the open air. The orchard itself appeared to them a world. For some time each remained silent, gazing around, first at one thing, then at another; at length Flapsy cried out, "What a charming place the world is! I never thought it was half so big!"

"Now, then," said the father, "you are safely landed on the ground, let me instruct you

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

what to do. Every living creature has something to perform. We small birds have a very easy task in comparison to others, being only required to seek food for ourselves, build nests



"HIS FATHER PUSHED HIM OFF THE BRANCH."

and provide for our young ones until they are able to care for themselves.

"We have, indeed, enemies to dread, such as birds of prey, but the worst foes we have are those of the human race, though even among them we redbreasts have a better chance than

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

many other birds, on account of a charitable action which two of our species are said to have performed towards a little boy and girl who were lost in a wood, where they were starved to death. The redbreasts I speak of saw the pair, hand in hand, stretched out on the cold ground, and would have fed them. They were, however, quite dead, and, being unable to bury them, the birds covered them with leaves. Many a redbreast has since shared the reward of this action, and I believe that those who do good to others always receive a recompense. Now, let us see what we can find for food."

Before long the birds were hopping about in search of food. Dicky had the good fortune to find four little worms together, but instead of calling his brother and sisters to partake of them, he devoured them all himself.

"Are you not ashamed, you little greedy creature?" cried his father, who observed his selfish disposition; "what would you think of your brother and sisters were they to serve you so?"

Dicky was quite confounded, and immediately

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

hopped away to find, if possible, something for his brother and sisters, that he might regain their good opinion.

In the meanwhile Robin found a caterpillar, which he intended to take for Pecksy; but just



“LET ME INSTRUCT YOU WHAT TO DO.”

as he was going to pick it up, a linnet, which had a nest in the orchard, snatched it from him, and flew away with it.

With the most furious rage Robin advanced

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

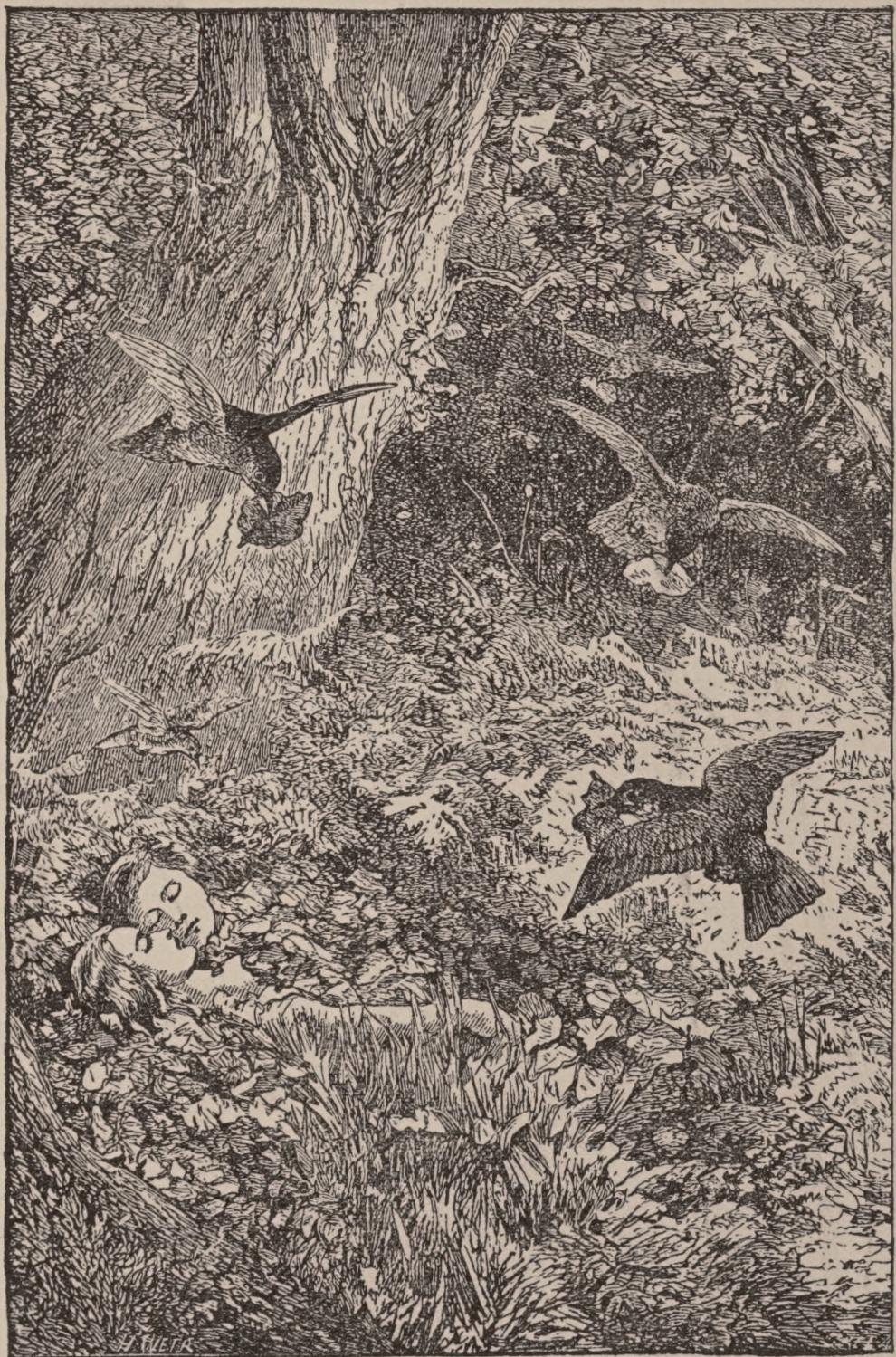
to his father, and entreated that he would fly after the linnet and tear his heart out.

“That would be taking violent revenge indeed,” said his father.

“No, Robin, the linnet has as great a right to the caterpillar as you or I. Restrain your anger, that you may be happy; for, believe me, peace and tranquillity are the most valuable things you can possess.”

At this instant, Pecksy came up with a fine fat spider in her mouth, which she laid down at her mother’s feet, and thus addressed her: “Accept, my dear parent, the first tribute of gratitude which I have ever been able to offer you.”

The eyes of the mother sparkled with delight; and knowing that Pecksy’s love would be disappointed by a refusal, she ate the spider which the dutiful nestling had so affectionately brought her; and then said, “How happy would families be if every one, like you, my dear Pecksy, consulted the welfare of the rest instead of turning their whole attention to their own interest.”



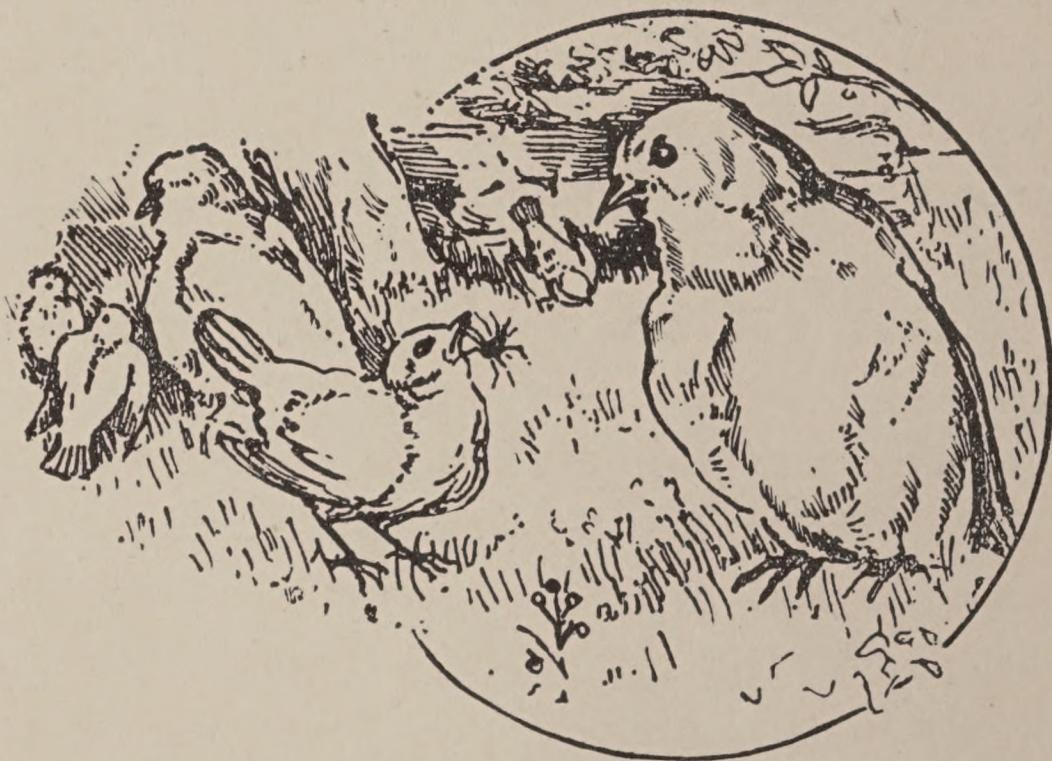
THE CHILDREN IN THE WOOD.

(See p. 72)



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

Dicky was not present at this speech, which he might have considered as a reflection on his own conduct; but he arrived as it was ended, and presented Pecksy with a worm, like those he had himself so greedily eaten. She received



"PECKSY CAME UP WITH A SPIDER IN HER MOUTH."

it with thanks, and declared it was doubly welcome from his beak.

"Certainly," said the mother, "fraternal love stamps a value on the most trifling presents."

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

### ROBIN'S CONCEIT

“Now, Robin,” cried the father, “let us see your dexterity in flying upward; come, I will show you how to raise yourself.”

“Oh, you need not take that trouble,” said the conceited bird; “as I flew down, I warrant I know how to fly up.” Then spreading his wings, he attempted to rise, but in so unskilful a manner, that he only shuffled along upon the ground.

“That will not do, however,” cried the father; “shall I show you now?”

Robin persisted in it that he stood in no need of instruction, and tried again; he managed to raise himself a little way, but soon tumbled headlong. His mother then began reproving him for his obstinacy, and advised him to accept his father’s kind offer of teaching him.

“Let him alone, let him alone,” said the father; “if he is above being taught, he may find his own way to the nest; I will teach his brother. “Come,” said he, “Dicky, let us see what you can do at flying upwards; you cut a noble figure this morning when you flew down.”



THE GREEDY YOUNG ROBIN.

(See p 73.)



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

Dicky, with reluctance, advanced; and, after some encouragement, flew back into the nest. Flapsy and Pecksy soon followed. Robin sat sulky; though convinced he had been in the wrong, he would not humble himself to his father, who therefore resolved to leave him a little while and return to the nest.

### ROBIN HAS A FALL

As soon as Robin found himself deserted, instead of being sorry, he gave way to anger and resentment. "Why," cried he, "am I to be treated in this maner, who am the eldest of the family, while all the little darlings are fondled and caressed? But I don't care, I can get to the nest yet, I make no doubt." He then attempted to fly, and after a great many trials, at length got up in the air, but he fell to the ground and bruised himself a good deal. Stunned with the fall, he lay for some minutes without sense or motion; but soon reviving and finding himself alone in this dismal condition, the horrors of his situation filled him with dreadful apprehensions and the bitterest remorse.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

His mother, who had been a painful eye-witness of Robin's fall, fetched him a worm, and Robin received the welcome gift with gratitude.

Refreshed with this delicious morsel, and comforted by his mother's kindness, he was able to stand up, and, on shaking his wings, he found that he was not so greatly hurt as he apprehended; his head, indeed, was bruised, so that one eye was almost closed, and he had injured the joint of one wing, so that he could not possibly fly; however, he could manage to hop, and the parent-bird, observing that Joe the gardener was cutting a hawthorn-hedge, which was near the spot, desired Robin to follow her; this he did, though with great pain.

When he had been for some time by himself, his mother made him another visit, and told him she had interceded with his father, whose anger was abated, and he would come to him before he went to rest. In a state of anxious expectation he continued almost to the time of sun-setting, when his father conducted him to a pump in the garden, where he refreshed him-



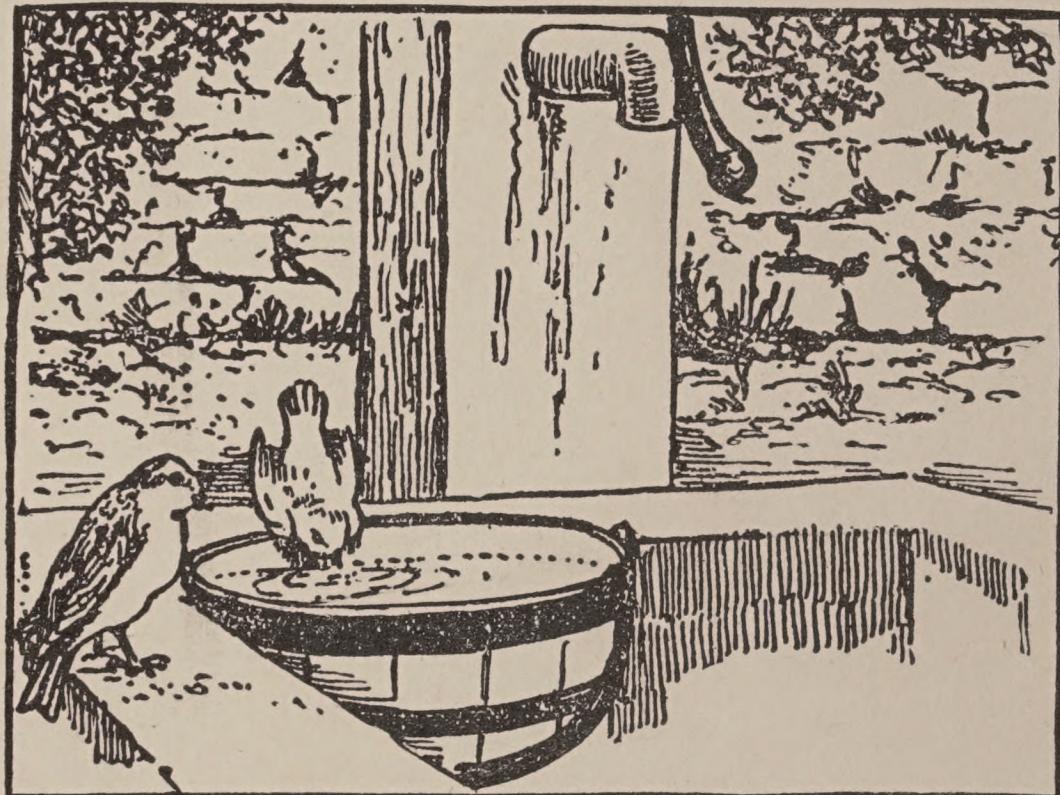
ROBIN STUNNED BY HIS FALL.

(See p. 81.)



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

self with a few drops of water. He now felt himself greatly relieved; but on his father's asking him what he intended to do with himself at night, his spirits sunk again, and he answered he did not know. "Well," said the



"ROBIN REFRESHED HIMSELF WITH THE WATER."

father, "I have thought of an expedient to secure you from cold at least. In a part of the orchard, a very little way from here, there is a place belonging to our friend the gardener, where I have sheltered myself from several

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

storms, and am sure it will afford you a comfortable lodging; so follow me before it is too late."

### ROBIN IN THE TOOL-HOUSE

The old bird then led the way, and his son followed him; when they arrived, they found the door of the tool-house open, and, as the threshold was low, Robin managed to get over it. His father looked carefully about, and at last found, in a corner, a bundle of strips of cloth kept for the purpose of nailing up trees.

"Here, Robin," said he, "is a charming bed for you; let me see you in it, and call your mother to have a peep, and then I must bid you good-night."

So saying, away he flew, and brought his mate, who was perfectly satisfied with the lodging provided for her late undutiful but now repentant son; but, reminded by her mate that if they stayed longer they might be shut in, they took leave, telling Robin they would visit him early in the morning.

Early next morning, Flapsy, Pecksy, and Dicky, went to the woodshed to see Robin.



ROBIN IN THE TOOL-HOUSE.



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

As soon as the old redbreasts left their little family, in order to go to Mrs. Benson's, Pecksy, with great kindness, began to ask Robin where he had hurt himself, and how he did. "Oh," said he, "I am much better; but it is a wonder I am now alive, for you cannot think what a dreadful fall I had."

Flapsy said, for her part, she longed to see the world, and to know how the higher ranks of birds behaved themselves, and what pleasures they enjoyed. And Dicky declared he felt the same wishes, though he must confess he had great dread of birds of prey.

"Oh," said Flapsy, "they will never seize such a pretty creature as you, Dicky, I am sure."

"Why, if beauty can prevail against cruelty, you will be secure, my sweet sister," replied he, "for your delicate shape must plead in your behalf."

### A BIRD OF PREY

Just as he had finished his speech, a hawk appeared in sight, on which the whole party was seized with a most uncommon sensation, and

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

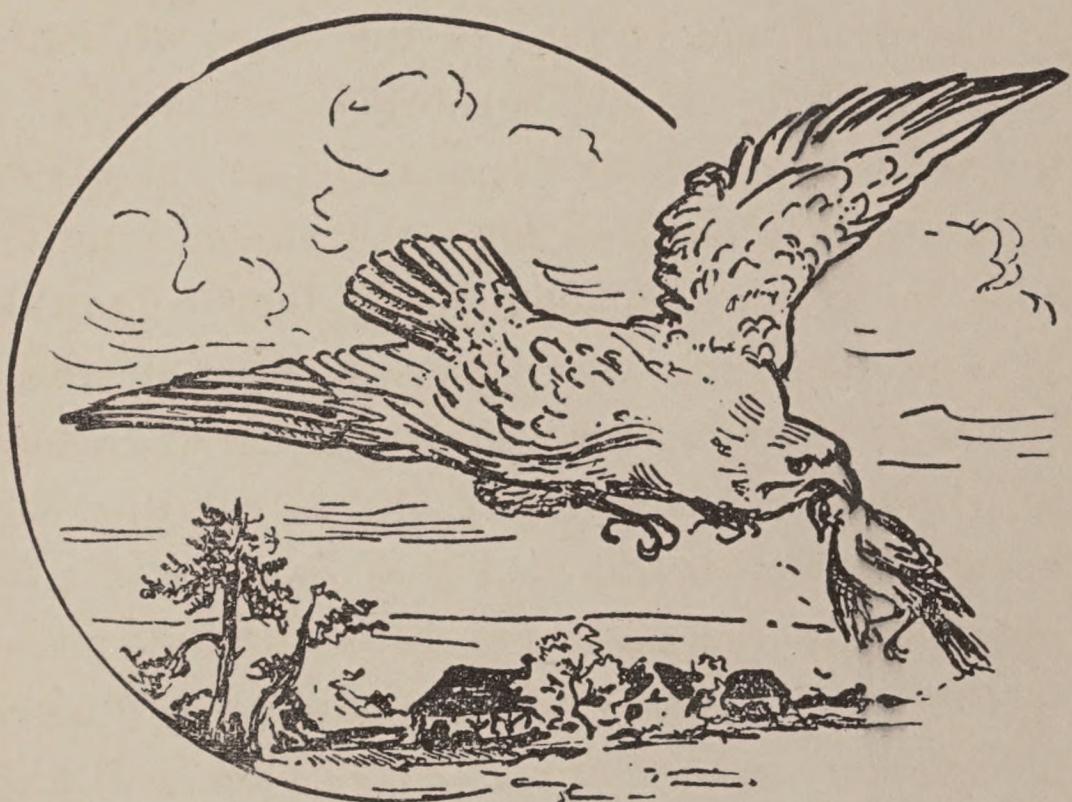
threw themselves on their backs, screaming with all their might; and at the same instant, the cries of numbers of little birds echoed through the orchard. The redbreasts soon recovered, and, rising on their feet, looked about to see what had become of the cause of their consternation. Then they beheld him high in the air, bearing off some unhappy victim, a few of whose feathers fell near the young family, who, on examining them, found they belonged to a goldfinch; on which Pecksy observed that it was evident these savages paid no attention to personal beauty. Dicky was so terrified he knew not what to do, and had thoughts of flying back to the nest; but after Robin's misfortune, he was fearful of offending his father; he therefore got up into a currant-bush, and hid himself in the thickest part of the leaves. Flapsy followed him; but Robin being obliged to kept on the ground, Pecksy kindly resolved to bear him company.

### ROBIN IS LOST AND FOUND

The day passed happily away; and early in

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

the evening, Flapsy, Pecksy, and Dicky were conducted to the nest. They mounted in the air with much more ease than the preceding day, and the parents instructed them how to fly to



“BEARING OFF SOME UNHAPPY VICTIM.”

the branches of some trees which stood near the ivy-wall.

In the meantime they had left Robin by himself, thinking he would be safe while the gardener was mowing some grass; but what was

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

the grief of both father and mother when they returned, and could neither see nor hear him! The gardener, too, was gone; they therefore apprehended that a cat or rat had taken Robin away and killed him, yet none of his feathers were to be seen. The father endeavored to comfort his mate and surviving nestlings, and so far succeeded that they resolved to bear the loss with patience.

After a mournful night, the mother left the nest early in the morning, unwilling to relinquish the hope which still remained of finding Robin again; but having spent an hour in this manner, she returned to her mate, who was comforting his little ones.

“Come,” said he, “let us take a flight; if poor Robin is dead, he will suffer no more; and if he is not, so much as we fly about, it is a chance but what we get tidings of him; suppose these little ones attempt to fly with us to our benefactors?” This was very pleasing to every one of the little ones, for they longed to go thither; and accordingly it was determined that they should immediately set out, and they ac-

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

complished the journey by easy stages; at length they arrived in the court.

As their father and mother flew into the window, the others directly followed them, and, to the inexpressible satisfaction of Frederick Benson, alighted on the tea-table, where they met with a very unexpected pleasure; for who should they find there as a guest but the poor lost Robin!

You may remember that Frederick obtained from his mother a promise, that, when the business of daily instruction was finished, he and his sister should go into the orchard in search of the robins; as soon, therefore, as the air was sufficiently cool, she took them with her, and arrived just after the parent birds had taken their young ones back to the nest. Robin was then left by himself, and kept hopping about; and, fearing no danger, got into the middle of the walk. Frederick descried him at a distance, and eagerly called out, "There's one of them, I declare!" and before Mrs. Benson observed him, he ran to the place and clapped his little hand over it, exulting that he had caught it.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

On Frederick's assuring her that his wing hung down when he first saw him, Mrs. Benson said, "It was most likely he was lamed by some accident, which had prevented his going with the others to the nest; and if that is the case," said she, "it will be humane and charitable to take care of him."

Frederick was delighted to hear her say so, and asked whether he might carry it home.

"Yes," said his mother, "provided you can take him safely."

I need not say that great care was taken of him; and you will easily suppose he had a more comfortable night than that he had passed in the shed.

In the morning Frederick was allowed to carry Robin into the breakfast parlor, where he placed him as has been already described.

For some time the young redbreasts behaved very well; but at length Dicky, familiarized by the kind treatment he met with, forgot his father's injunctions, and began to hop about in a very rude maner; he even jumped into the plate of bread-and butter; and having a mind

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

to taste the tea, hopped on the edge of a cup, but dipping his foot in the hot liquid, he was glad to make a hasty retreat. Flapsy took the freedom of pecking at the sugar, but found it



“ ‘‘THERE’S ONE OF THEM, I DECLARE ! ’’

too hard for her beak. For these liberties their mother reproved them, saying she would never bring them with her again if they were guilty of such rudeness as to take what was not offered to them.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

As their longer stay would have broken in upon a plan which Mrs. Benson had concerted, she rang her bell, and the footman came to remove the breakfast things; on which the old birds, having taken leave of Robin, and promised to come again the next day, flew out at the window, followed by Dicky, Flapsy, and Pecksy. Robin was safely deposited in a cage, and passed a happy day, being often allowed to hop out in order to be fed.

### THE ROBINS MEET OTHER BIRDS

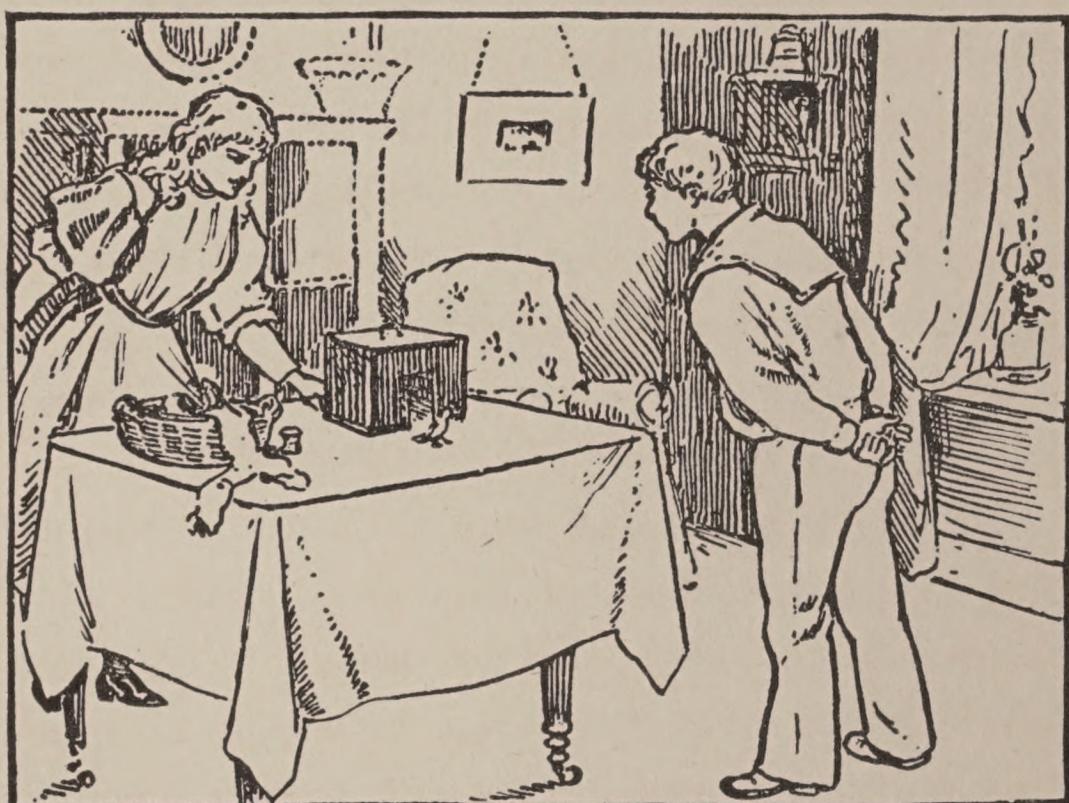
“You have not yet seen,” said the father, one day, “the whole of this place, and I wish to introduce you to our neighbors.” He then led the way to a pear-tree in which a linnet had built her nest. The old linnets seemed much pleased to see their friends the redbreasts, who with great pride introduced their little family to them.

They then flew on to a cherry-tree, in which were a pair of chaffinches in great agitation, endeavoring to part one of their own brood and a young sparrow which were engaged in a

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

furious battle, but in vain; neither of the combatants would desist till the chaffinch dropped dead to the ground.

They alighted on the ground and began peck-



“ROBIN WAS SAFELY DEPOSITED IN A CAGE.”

ing about, when all of a sudden they heard a strange noise which rather alarmed the young ones. Their father desired them to have no fears, but to follow him. He led them to the top of a high tree, in which was a nest of mag-

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

pies, who all were eager to speak, and none inclined to hear.

“What a set of foolish, ill-bred little creatures are these,” said the cock redbreast; “if they would talk one at a time, what each says might afford entertainment to the rest.”

So saying, he flew on, and they soon saw a cuckoo, surrounded by a number of birds who had been pecking at her till she had scarce a feather left upon her breast; while she kept repeating her own dull note, “Cuckoo! cuckoo!” incessantly.

They soon came to a hollow tree. “Peep into this hole,” said the cock bird to his young ones.

They did so, and beheld a nest of young owls. “What a set of ugly creatures,” said Dicky; “surely you do not intend to show your frightful faces in the world! Did ever any one see such dull eyes, and why are you so muffled up with feathers?”

“Whoever you are that reproach us with the want of beauty, you do not show your own good sense,” replied one of the little owls; “I can show you a pair of eyes which, if you are little

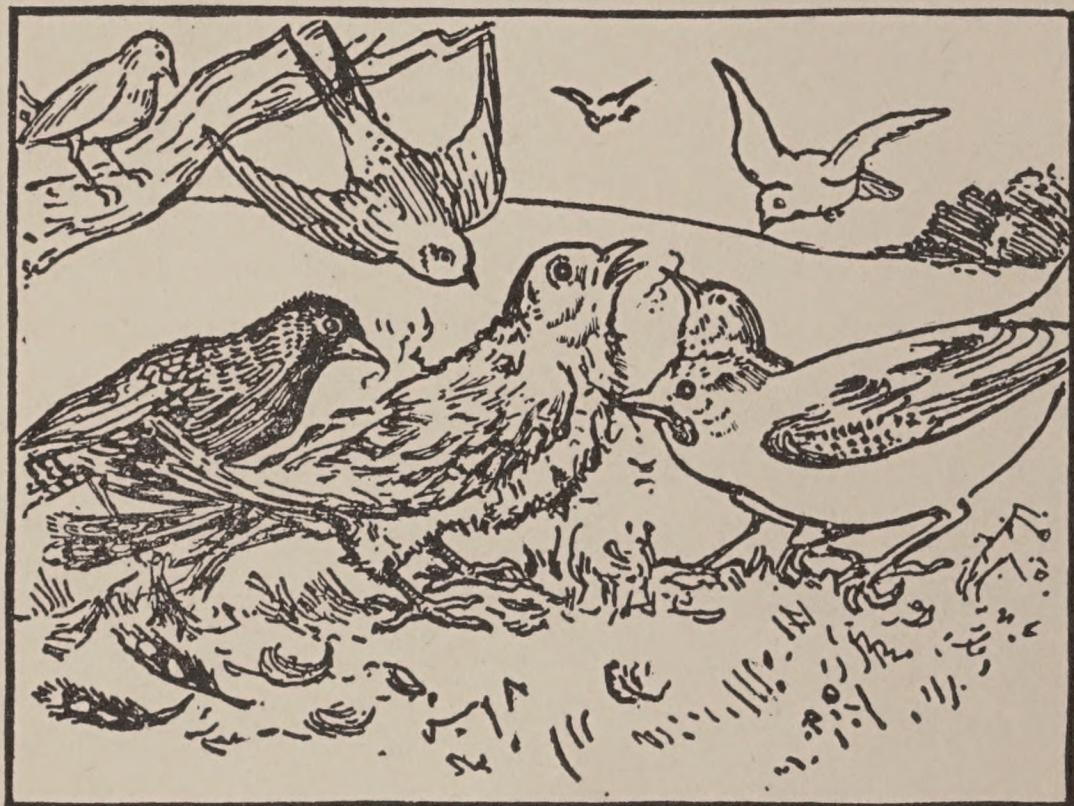


FIGHT BETWEEN A CHAFFINCH AND A SPARROW.



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

birds, will frighten you out of your wits; and if I could fly, I would let you see what else I could do." He then drew back the film which was given him that the strong light might not in-



"CUCKOO! CUCKOO!"

jure his sight, and stared full at Dicky, who was struck with astonishment.

At that instant the parent owl returned, and seeing a parcel of strangers looking into her nest, she set up a screeching which made the whole party take wing.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

They soon alighted on a tree in which was a mocking-bird, who, instead of singing any note of his own, kept successively imitating those of every bird that inhabited the orchard; and this with a view of making them ridiculous. If any one had any natural imperfection in his singing, he was sure to mimic it; or if any one was particularly attentive to the duties of his station, he ridiculed him as grave and formal. The young redbreasts were excessively diverted with this droll creature; but their father desired them to consider whether they should like to hear him mimic them. Every one agreed that they should be very angry to be ridiculed in that manner.

“Then,” replied the father, “neither encourage nor imitate them.”

The mocking-bird, hearing him, took up his notes

“Neither encourage nor imitate him,” said he.

The cock redbreast on this flew at him with fury, plucked some feathers from his breast, and sent him screaming from the place.



THE MAGPIES AND THEIR NEST.

(See p. 98.)



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

I have made you sing a natural note at last," said he, "and hope you will take care how you practice mimicry again."

The whole redbreast family rested themselves for some time; and whilst they sat still, they



"HOPPED INTO FREDERICK'S HAND."

observed a chaffinch flying from tree to tree, chattering to every bird he had any knowledge of; and his discourse seemed to affect his hearers greatly, for they perceived some birds flying off in great haste and others meeting

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

them; many battles and disputes ensued. The little redbreasts wondered at these circumstances; at length Pecksy inquired the meaning of the bustle.

“This chaffinch,” replied the father, “is a tell-tale; it is inconceivable the mischief he makes.”

As the redbreast was speaking, a flock of birds assembled about the tree; it consisted of those to whom the chaffinch had been chattering, who, having come to an explanation with each other, had detected his falsities, and determined to expel him from the orchard; which they did with every mark of contempt and ignominy. All the redbreasts joined in the pursuit, for even the little ones saw his character in a detestable light, and formed a determination to avoid his fault. When the liar was gone, each individual flew to his resting place, and the redbreasts, after so fatiguing a day, fell asleep.

### SEEING THE WORLD

The next morning the redbreasts attended at Mrs. Benson’s as usual. When the young ones



THE NEST OF YOUNG OWLS.

(See p. 101.)



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

had stayed as long as she thought right, the hen redbreast summoned them away, and all took leave of Robin, who longed to go with them, but was not able. The father reminded him that he had great reason to rejoice in his present situation, considering all things; on which he resumed his cheerfulness, and giving a sprightly twitter, hopped into Frederick's hand, which was spread open to receive him. The rest then flew away, and Harriet and her brother prepared for their morning tasks.

The redbreasts alighted, as usual, to drink in the court-yard, and were preparing to return to the orchard, when Flapsy expressed a desire to look a little about the world; for she said it would be very mopish to be always confined to the orchard; and Dicky seconded her request. The father led the way to a neighboring grove, where he placed his little tribe amongst the branches of a venerable oak.

Here their ears were charmed with a most enchanting concert of music. On one tree a blackbird and a thrush poured forth their strong, melodious notes; on another, a number

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

of linnets joined their sweet voices; exalted in the air, a skylark warbled a delightful song; whilst a brother of the wood, seated on a cool, refreshing turf, made the grove re-echo with his melody; to these the nightingale joined his enchanting lay. In short, not a note was wanting to complete the harmony.

Observing some boys creeping silently along, "Stop," said the father, "perch on this tree, and see what these little monsters are about." Scarcely were they seated, when one of the boys mounted an adjacent tree and took a nest of half-fledged linnets, which he brought in triumph to his companions.

At this instant a family of thrushes unfortunately chirped, which directed another boy to the place of their habitation; on which he climbed, and eagerly seized the unfortunate little creatures. Having met with so much success, the boys left the grove to exult at their own homes over their wretched captives, forever separated from their tender parents.

They took another flight, and saw a man scattering seed upon the ground.



THE CONCERT OF BIRDS.

(See p. 109.)

III



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“See there,” said Dicky, “what fine food that man throws down; I dare say he is some good creature, who is a friend to the feathered race; shall we alight and partake of his bounty?”

“Do not form too hasty an opinion, Dicky,”



“THE MAN WAS A BIRD-CATCHER.”

said the father; “watch here a little while, and then do as you will.”

All the little ones stretched their necks, and kept a curious eye fixed on the man. In a few minutes a number of sparrows, chaffinches, and

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

linnets descended, and began to regale themselves; but, in the midst of their feast, a net was suddenly cast over them and they were all taken captives. The man, who was a bird-catcher by profession, called to his assistant, who brought a cage divided into a number of small partitions, in which the linnets and chaffinches were separately deposited. In this dismal prison, where they had scarcely room to flutter, were those little creatures confined who lately poured forth their songs of joy, fearless of danger. As for the sparrows, their necks were wrung, and they were put in a bag together. The little redbreasts trembled for themselves, and were in great haste to take wing.

“Stay,” said the father, “Dicky has not yet made acquaintance with this friend of the feathered race.”

“No,” said Dicky, “nor do I desire it; defend me, and all who are dear to me, from such friends as these!”

“Well,” said the father, “learn from this instance never to form a hasty judgment, nor



TAKING THE LINNET'S NEST.

(See p. 110.)



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

to put yourself into the power of strangers, who offer you favors you have no right to expect from their hands."

As they flew on, the father hastily called out,



"THEY SAW A FLASH OF FIRE."

"Turn this way, turn this way!" The whole party obeyed the word of command, and found the good effects of their obedience; for, in an instant, they saw a flash of fire; a thick smoke followed it, and immediately they heard

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

a dreadful sound, and saw a young redstart fall bleeding to the ground, on which he struggled just long enough to cry, "Oh, my dear father, why did I not listen to your admonitions," and then expired.

The little redbreasts were struck with consternation at this dreadful accident; and Pecksy, who recovered the soonest, begged her father would inform her by what means the redstart was killed.

"He was shot to death," said he; "and had you not followed my directions, it might have been the fate of every one of you; therefore, let it be a lesson to you to follow every injunction of your parents with the same readiness for the future. This poor redstart might have avoided his fate; for I heard his father, when I was last in the grove, advise him not to fly about by himself till he had shown him the dangers of the world."

Pecksy answered that she knew the value of parental instruction so well, that she should certainly treasure up in her heart every maxim of it; and the others promised to do the same.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

“But,” said Flapsy, “I cannot understand the nature of the accident which occasioned the death of the redstart.”

“Neither can I explain it to you, my dear,” replied the father. “I only know that it is a



“NEITHER CAN I EXPLAIN IT,” REPLIED THE FATHER.

very common practice with some men to carry instruments, from which they discharge something which proves fatal to many a bird; but I have, by attentive observation, learned how to evade the mischief. But come, let us descend

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

and refresh ourselves a little, as we may do it with safety; and then we will see if we cannot find a place where you can have amusement, without being exposed to such dangers as attend the inhabitants of woods and groves.

“Are you sufficiently rested to take a pretty long flight?”

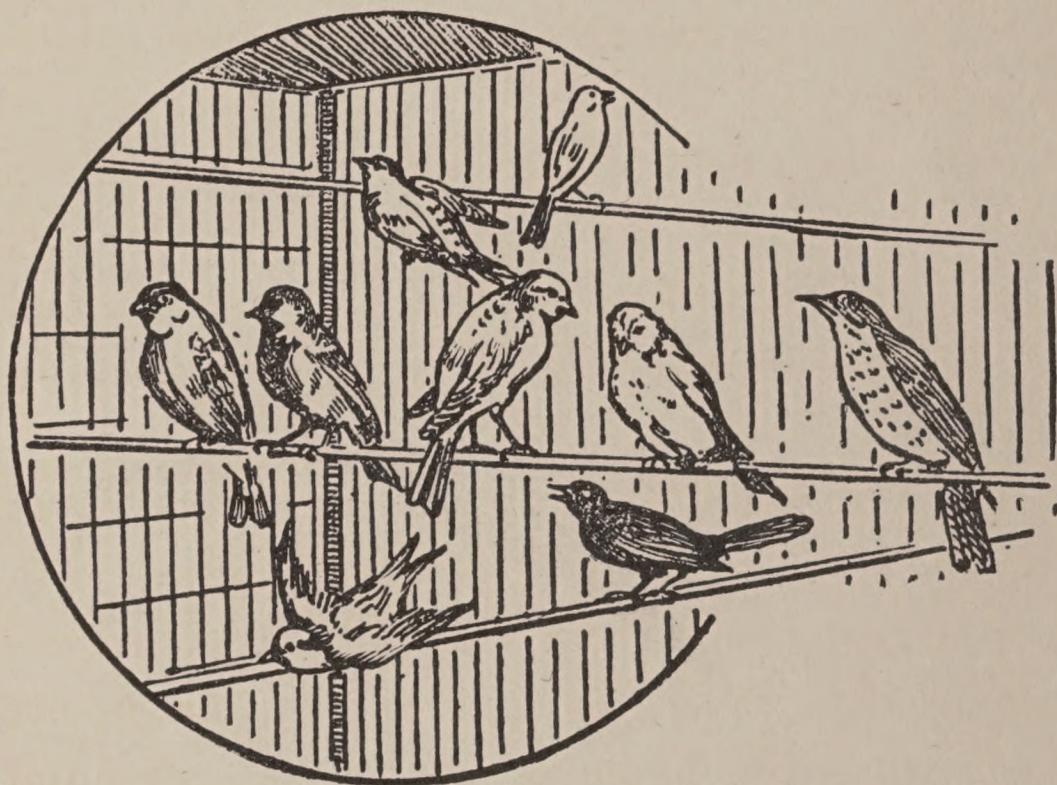
“Oh, yes,” cried Dicky, who was quite eager to leave the spot in which, a short time before, he had longed to pass his life. The rest joined in the same wish, and every wing was instantly expanded.

The father led the way, and in a very short time he and his family arrived at the estate of a gentleman, who, having a plentiful fortune, endeavored to collect all that was curious in art and nature, for the amusement of his own mind and the gratification of others. He had a house like a palace, furnished with every expensive rarity; his gardens, to which the redbreasts took their flight, were laid out in such a manner as to afford the most delightful variety to the eye.

Amongst other articles of taste was an aviary,

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

which was built like a temple, enclosed with brass wire; the framework was painted green, and ornamented with gilt carving; in the middle a fountain continually threw up fresh water, which fell into a basin whose brink was



PERCHES WERE PLACED IN PARTS OF THE AVIARY.

enameled with flowers; at one end were partitions for birds' nests, and troughs containing various kinds of seeds, and materials for building nests. This part was carefully sheltered from every inclemency of the weather. Num-

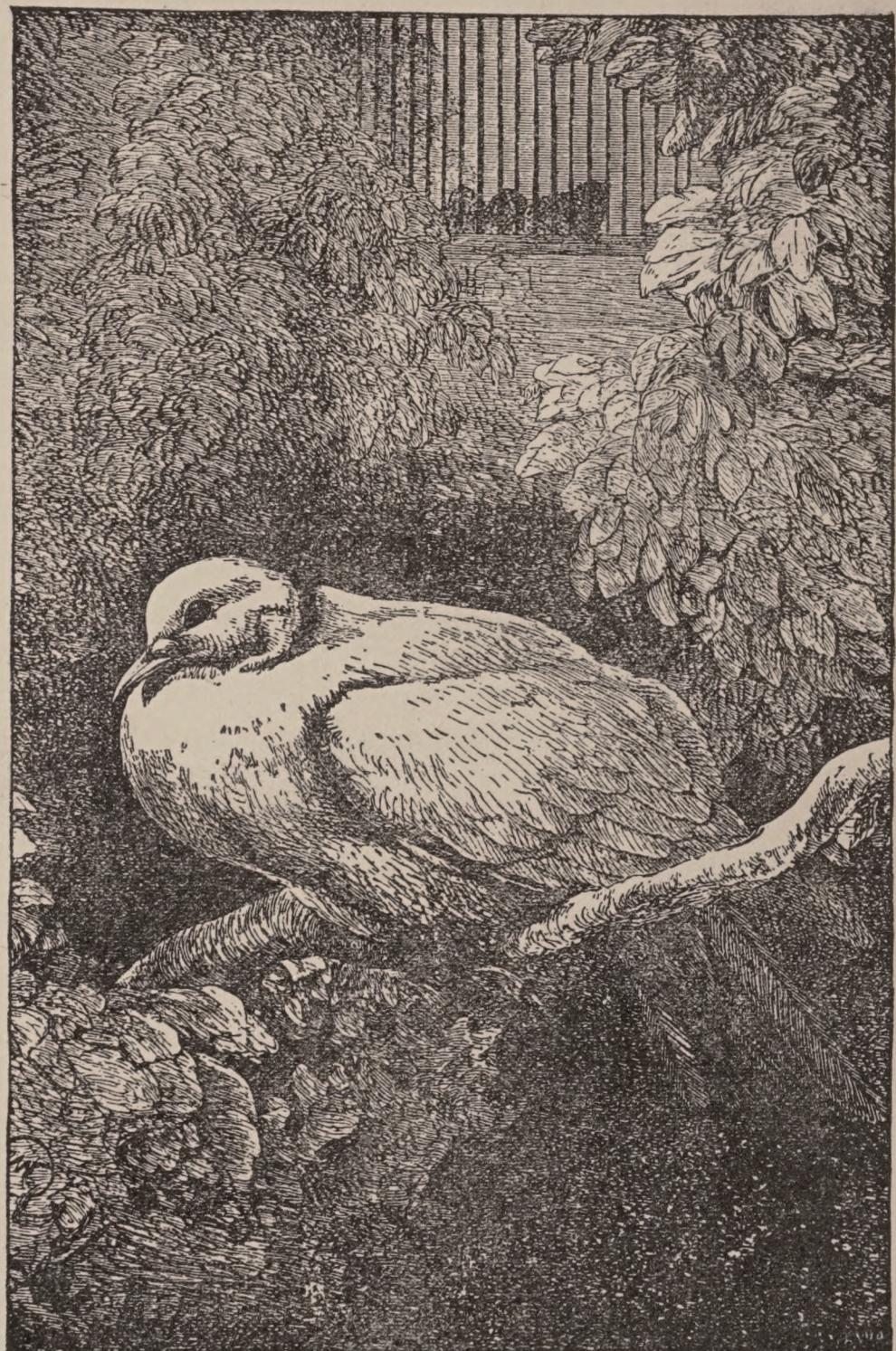
## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

bers of perches were placed in different parts of the aviary, and it was surrounded by a most beautiful shrubbery.

A habitation like this, in which all the conveniences of life seemed to be collected, where abundance was supplied without toil, where each gay songster might sing himself to repose in the midst of ease and plenty, safe from the dangers of the woods appeared to our young travelers desirable beyond all the situations in the world; and Dicky expressed an earnest wish to be admitted into it.

“Well,” said the father, “let us not determine hastily; it will be advisable first to inquire whether its inhabitants are really happy before you make interest to become one of the number; place yourselves by me on this shrub, and whilst we rest ourselves we shall have opportunity of seeing what passes.”

The first bird that attracted their notice was a dove, who sat cooing by himself in a corner, in accents so gentle and sweet, that a stranger to his language would have listened to them with delight; but the redbreasts, who understood



THE UNHAPPY DOVE.



## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

their import, heard them with sympathetic concern.

“Oh, my dear, my beloved mate,” said he, “am I then divided from you forever? What avails it that I am furnished here with all the elegancies and luxuries of life? Deprived of your company, I have no enjoyment of them; the humblest morsel, though gained with toil and danger, would be infinitely preferable to me, if shared with you.”

“What think you now, Dicky,” said the red-breast; “have you as high an idea of the happiness of this place as you conceived at the first view of it?”

“I cannot help thinking still,” replied Dicky, “that it is a charming retreat, and that it must be very comfortable to have everything provided for one’s use.”

“Well,” said the father, “let us move and observe those linnets who are building their nest.” Accordingly they flew to a tree, the branches of which formed a part of the shelter of the aviary, where they easily heard, without being themselves observed, all that passed in it.

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

### ABLE TO CARE FOR THEMSELVES

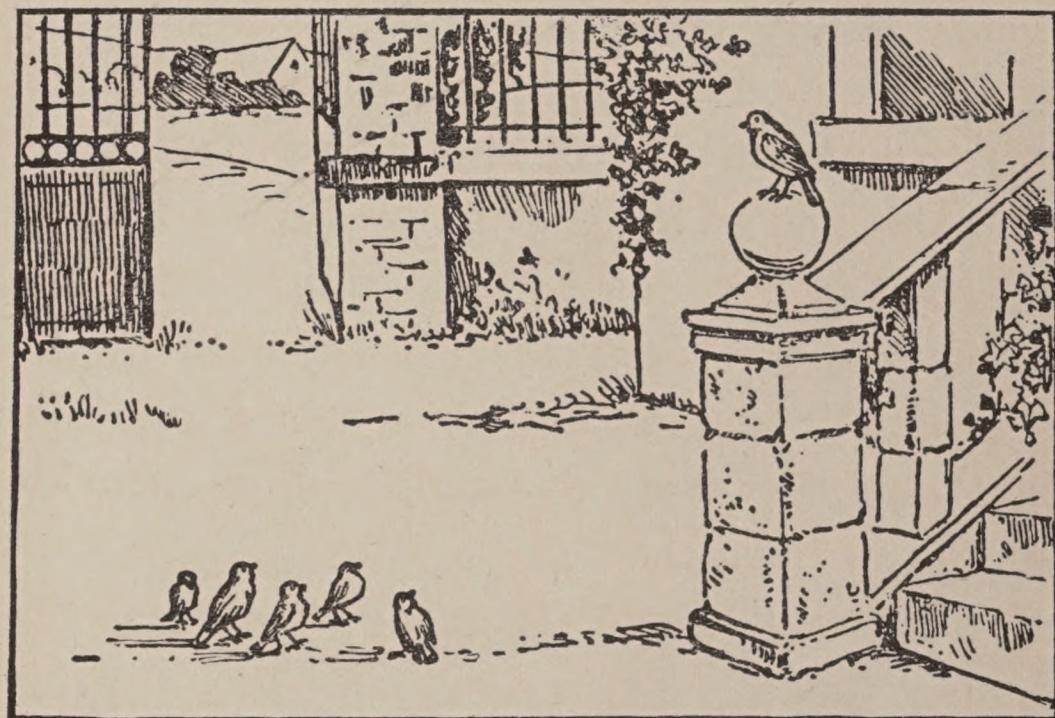
For three successive days nothing remarkable happened, either at Mrs. Benson's, or in the red-breasts' nest. The little family came to the breakfast table, and Robin recovered from his accident, though not sufficiently to fly well; but Dicky, Flapsy, and Pecksy continued so healthy, and improved so fast, that they required no further care; and the third morning after this tour to the grove they did not commit the least error. When they retired from the parlor into the court-yard, to which Robin accompanied them, the father expressed great delight that they were at length able to provide for themselves.

And now a wonderful change took place in his own heart. The ardent affection for his young, which had hitherto made him, for their sakes, patient of toil and fearless of danger, was on a sudden quenched; but, from the goodness of his disposition, he still felt a kind of solicitude for their future welfare; and, calling them around him, he thus addressed them:—

“You must be sensible, my dear ones, that,

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

from the time you left the egg-shell till the present instant, both your mother and I have nourished you with the tenderest love. We have taught you all the arts of life which are necessary to procure you subsistence and pre-



"THEY RETIRED FROM THE PARLOR TO THE COURT-YARD."

serve you from danger. We have shown you a variety of characters in the different classes of birds, and pointed out those which are to be shunned. You must now take care of yourselves; but, before we part, let me repeat my

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

admonition to use industry, avoid contention, cultivate peace, and be contented with your condition. You, Robin, I would advise, on account of your infirmity, to attach yourself to the family where you have been so kindly cherished."

While he thus spake, his mate stood by; who, finding the same change beginning to take place in her own breast, viewed her young ones with tender regret; and, when he ceased, cried out, "Adieu, you dear objects of my late cares and anxiety! May you never more stand in need of a mother's assistance!" Then, spreading her wings, she folded them successively to her bosom, and instantly recovered her tranquillity.

The old redbreasts, having now only themselves to provide for, resolved to be no longer burdensome to their benefactors; and, after pouring forth their gratitude in the most lively strains, they took their flight together, resolving never to separate.

Robin, in pursuance of his father's advice, attached himself to Mrs. Benson's family, where he was a great favorite, but his wing

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

never recovered sufficiently to enable him to take long flights. However, he found himself at liberty to do as he pleased; he visited the tea-table every morning, and there he usually met his sister Pecksy, who took up her abode in the

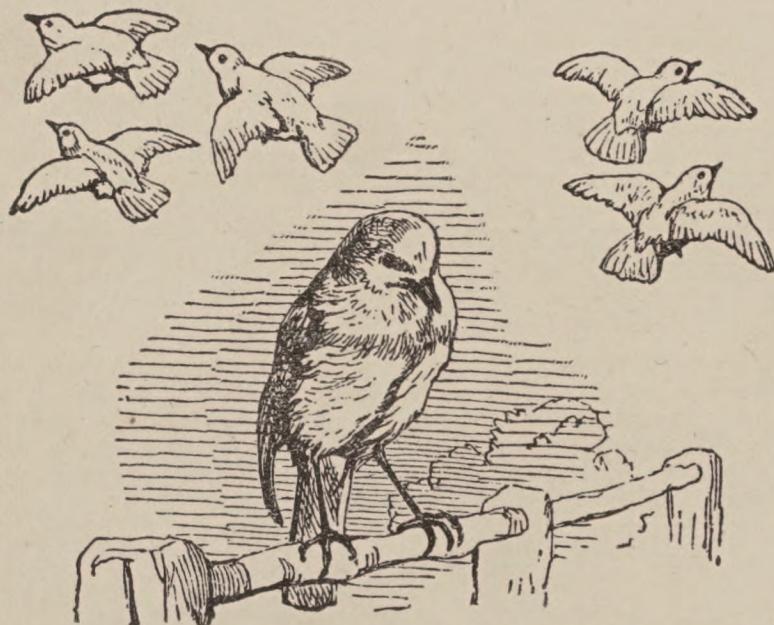


THE YOUNG ROBINS WATCH THE DEPARTURE OF THEIR PARENTS.

orchard, where she enjoyed the friendship of her father and mother. Dicky and Flapsy, who thought their company too grave, flew giddily about together. In a short time they were both caught in a trap-cage, and put into the aviary

## THE STORY OF THE ROBINS

which Dicky once longed to inhabit. Here they were at first very miserable; but after a while recollecting their good parents' advice, and the example of the linnets, they at length reconciled themselves to their lot.



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